Sunday, December 28, 2025 No 358 ₹8

DH on Sunday

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Arsenal ride on luck to top

A fortunate own goal helps Arsenal withstand a late Brighton push

P13

Thailand, Cambodia sign new ceasefire agreement

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DH on Sunday

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DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

Doping threat amid India's Olympic push

While there's progress, more needs to be done to curb doping menace

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Big Picture
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Slang brain era

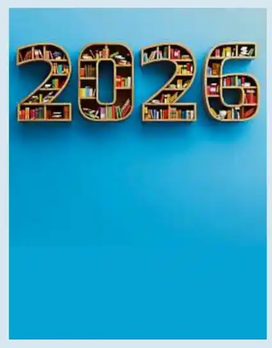
As we bid goodbye to 2025, we examine how internet language seeped into the mainstream, quietly altering how we think, feel, argue and connect

Travel
Page19

Eastward ho!

The Indian traveller has eyes set on destinations in Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, in 2026

Books
Page18



Turning the pages

Check out the best of fiction and nonfiction of 2025 and the books to look forward to in the coming year

Food & Drink
Page20

All about intent

The F&B sector is all set to move away from excess and focus on micro concepts and curated experiences

Quickly

GRAM G to cost K'taka Rs 20k cr in 5 yrs

Karnataka will have to spend about Rs 20,000 crore over five years to implement the Centre's new rural employment scheme, Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge said on Saturday, slamming the Modi administration for not consulting states. The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act requires states to bear 40% of funding.
Details on Page 3

Digvijaya pats BJP-RSS, causes stir

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Saturday created a flutter just ahead of a Congress Working Committee meeting by praising RSS-BJP's system of promoting grassroot workers to leadership by citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's case even as he told his party leadership the perils of "over centralisation" that is harming the organisation.
Details on Page 3

2024 stampede: Allu Arjun in chargesheet

Telugu actor Allu Arjun has been named in the chargesheet pertaining to the 2024 Sandhya Theatre stampede case that claimed one life and left a child critically injured. The Hyderabad police have named Allu Arjun as Accused No. 11, along with 22 others.
Details on Page 3

Woman molested at shopping mall

A woman was allegedly molested at Phoenix Marketcity in eastern Bengaluru during Christmas celebrations on Wednesday night. The police have registered a case and have launched a search for the suspect, who had fled the spot soon after the incident.

'Bad weather': IndiGo cancels 57 flights

Domestic carrier IndiGo on Saturday cancelled 57 flights across its network, citing "bad weather" at various airports, including Bengaluru, according to the airline's website.

The vanishing footprints of Karnataka's prehistoric legacy

The state's ancient sites are battling neglect, encroachment, bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of awareness, putting millennia of history at serious risk

PAVAN KUMAR H
TEKKALAKOTE/ MASKI/ HUNASAGI (BALLARI/ RAICHUR/YADGIR), DHNS

Karnataka has numerous archaeological sites showing prehistoric human habitation. In pic, dolmens at Hire Benakal in Koppal district, which is currently on the UNESCO's World Heritage Site temporary list. PHOTO BY ARJUN G R

Basavaprabhu, a Class 6 student at the government primary school in Yadgir's Budihal, gets excited whenever visitors arrive in his otherwise nondescript village. He invariably guides them to his school's backyard, pointing out Budiguddas, the ash mounds across a five-to-six-acre area believed to be a human settlement from nearly 4,000 years ago.

An excavation carried out around four decades ago by eminent archaeologist K Paddayya identified Budihal as one of India's earliest known Neolithic village settlements, dating to 2000–1400 BCE. Excavations of three ash mounds here uncovered

INSIGHT

stone and iron agricultural tools, pottery, animal remains and child urn burials, all characteristic of Neolithic life.

Ash mounds offer archeologists with crucial insights into early agro-pastoral life, food habits, fertility rituals and the social structure that laid the foundation for urbanisation in the present-day Karnataka region.

Many of these ash mound remains, however, have vanished, carted away by locals for use as roofing binders, compound walls or even manure.

Barely 35 km from Budihal lies Isampur, an Early Palaeolithic site that has documented the presence of *Homo erectus*, ancestors who lived nearly 1.2 million years ago. One of India's major Palaeolithic sites, Isampur is known for its ancient stone quarry and tool-manufacturing site, making it an iconic location in Karnataka's prehistory.

Electron Spin Resonance (ESR) dating of animal fossils from the site indicates human habitation nearly 1.2 million years ago. K Paddayya's excavations on private land yielded over 15,000 limestone tools used by early humans for hunting and food gathering.

"The region holds immense potential to explain several missing links in human evolution. Unfortunately, poor conservation and protection have allowed these landscapes to be converted into paddy fields," he laments.

Today, nearly 90% of the artefacts excavated by Paddayya over four decades in the Hunasigi Valley are housed at Deccan College, Pune. Neither the state government nor the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has created facilities to preserve them locally. A small portion is displayed at the Hunasigi Panchayat office, while a few cartons of artefacts sit in Basavaprabhu's school.

Prehistoric sites bear evidence of human activity from before the invention of writing. Archaeologists reconstruct prehistoric life through material remains such as tools, dwellings, burials, rock art and food remains. They are crucial to understanding early human life, culture, technology and interactions with nature.

The prehistoric time is broadly divided into the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), Neolithic (New Stone Age) and Chalcolithic (Copper Age).

Karnataka's prehistoric heritage spans over a million years, from Palaeolithic settlements in the Hunasigi Valley to Neolithic and Iron Age remains at Brahmagiri in Chitradurga. It also includes Iron Age megalithic monuments at Hire Benakal near Koppal, as well as petroglyph sites at Avalakki Pare, Buddhanajeddu, Gavali and Baradakallu Bole in Udupi district.

The multiple *dobas*, a Persian term for tracts of land between two rivers, stretching from Bidar to Ballari, along with the plains of central Karnataka and the coastal region, are believed to have been inhabited throughout these periods.

Experts estimate that nearly 90% of Karnataka's prehistoric sites have been encroached upon — converted into farmland, layouts, industries, roads and canals.

▸ Prehistoric sites, Page 2

Time for CER: Corporate Environment Responsibility

The recent SC judgment emphasises that CSR environmental spending is a constitutional obligation, not voluntary charity

GAYATHRI D NAIK

The Great Indian Bustard (GIB) case highlighted the need to balance species protection with climate action, leading to a judicial rights-based approach to climate change. In pic, a researcher feeds two GIB chicks at a conservation centre in Rajasthan. DH PHOTO/ PAVAN KUMAR H

Article 51A(g) of the Constitution of India mandates a fundamental duty on every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment. On December 19, 2025, in *MK Ranjitsinh v Union of India*, the Supreme Court extended this duty to corporate entities while addressing the protection of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB), thereby incorporating environmental responsibility into corporate social responsibility (CSR). This interpretation has important implications for corporate accountability and environmental governance in the country.

In 2019, a writ petition was filed before the Supreme Court under Article 32 of the Constitution seeking interventions for the protection of GIB and Lesser Florican in Rajasthan and Gujarat, from threats to these species and their habitats attributed to overhead energy transmission lines, and for directions to appoint an expert committee to oversee the implementation of the court's orders.

In an interim order in 2021, the Supreme Court imposed restrictions on the installation of overhead transmission lines over an area of about 99,000 sq km and appointed a three-member committee to assess the feasibility of transitioning to high-voltage underground power lines. The order also required the installation of bird diverters on existing overhead lines in priority

The SUNDAY STORY

bustard habitat areas until a final decision on undergrounding could be made.

In its 2024 judgment, the Supreme Court revisited and modified its 2021 order to better balance species conservation with India's climate and energy transition goals, and appointed an expert committee to determine how to achieve this balance between environmental protection and sustainable development. The 2025 judgment discusses the expert committee's report and clarifies how to reconcile species conservation with climate commitments pursued through renewable energy sources.

The Great Indian Bustard Case and the discussions on balancing our commitments to species protection and addressing climate change impacts led to the judicial contribution of deriving a rights-based approach to climate change. The right against the adverse effects of climate change has been recognised as a distinct constitutional right, grounded in the right to equality under Article 14 and the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Reading climate change into the rights to life and equality and recognising a distinct 'right against the adverse effects of climate change' brought several key issues into mainstream discussion. It highlighted how inequitable distribution of climate impacts and the inability of many communities to adapt to these threats can violate their constitutional rights to life and equality.

With the right to a clean environment recognised as a fundamental right, the State has a duty to protect, respect and fulfil this right. The court interpreted this duty to require the State to adopt effective measures to mitigate climate change and to ensure that all individuals have the capacity to adapt to the climate crisis.

A closer reading of the 2024 judgment shows the priority it attached to India's climate change mitigation efforts by emphasising the transition to cleaner, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

▸ Environment responsibility, Page 2

DH SPECIAL

K'taka feels the chill: Dipping mercury points to a sharper cold trend

VITTAL SHASTRI
KALABURAGI, DHNS

As plunging temperatures sweep across Karnataka and officials issue cold wave alerts in several regions, data reveals a deeper trend: nearly half of the state's districts have witnessed extreme declines in minimum temperatures over the past few years, pointing to a pattern that extends beyond this winter alone.

Notably, most of the ten all-time lowest minimum temperatures in these districts have been recorded only since 2005. India Meteorological Department (IMD) has maintained comprehensive weather data for over a century through its observation stations across the state.

All-time ten coldest years since 1901 in Bengaluru rural (minimum 9.5°C), Mysuru (8.1°C), Raichur (7.1°C), Vijayapura (6°C) and Bidar (5.6°C) are recorded in the last two decades. Bagalkot has recorded eight coldest years since 2022 in the history of over four decades with the lowest temperature dropping up to 6.6°C.

Officials have attributed the temperature drop to western disturbances and jet streams, prompting cold wave warnings over concerns about health risks and the spread of fungal diseases in crops.

Experts say that all three seasons this year have been marked by extremes, with an extended monsoon setting the stage for unusually cold conditions across the state. The recent sharp fall in temperatures is also linked to a mix of global and local atmospheric factors, including the La Niña phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean.

Meanwhile, districts such as Kalaburagi, Chitradurga, Hassan and Chikkamagaluru have also experienced severe cold conditions over the past two decades, with temperatures dropping to 10°C or lower. These districts have recorded seven to eight of their coldest years in the 21st century alone. Historical records further indicate that temperatures are likely to drop even more in January in districts including Dharwad, Belagavi, Haveri, Davangere, and both rural and urban Bengaluru, making January colder than December.

People keep themselves warm in Davangere following recent fall in temperatures. DH PHOTO/SATISH BADIGER

Extreme weather bouts

Extreme weather events such as intense cold waves, floods, heatwaves and severe storms have become more frequent in recent years. Several factors, including natural climate variations and deforestation, are responsible, says IMD scientist C S Patil.

Meanwhile, N Puviarasan, Head of the IMD Meteorological Centre in Bengaluru, says the phenomenon is not unusual. "Cold air advection due to winds from the north-eastern direction brings down temperatures in north interior Karnataka. Climate change is being witnessed everywhere. Clear-sky radiation cooling and local factors such as reduction in forest cover contribute to climate change, leading to lower temperatures," he explains.

- **Prehistory** is the period before the invention of writing, beginning with the appearance of humans and the earliest evidence of man-made tools
- It encompasses **stone, bronze** and **iron** ages
- **Karnataka** has numerous archaeological sites showing prehistoric human habitation
- They are concentrated along the valleys of the **Krishna, Bhima, Malaprabha, Ghataprabha, Cauvery, Hemavathi, Shimsha, Tungabhadra, Manjra Pennar**, and **Netravati** and their tributaries
- While some sites are managed by the State government's Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, some others come under the **Archeological Survey of India** (ASI)
- **90%** of these sites remain neglect due to multiple reasons

Conservation hinges on research

Pre-historic sites, from Page 1

Many sites are on the brink due to lack of legal protection, delayed notification as protected areas, shortage of trained staff, slow bureaucratic processes, poor adoption of modern technology, and pressures from urbanisation and agricultural or residential encroachment.

The Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage (DAMH), responsible for the protecting and maintaining the state's ancient monuments, museums and heritage buildings, does not even have data on the total number of prehistoric sites in Karnataka.

Experts say that successive governments have relegated prehistoric sites to the lowest conservation priority, largely because they generate little tourism revenue.

Namita Sugandhi, an Associate Professor from Hartwick College, New York, has been studying the Neolithic site of Tekkalakote in Ballari's Siruguppa taluk for over two decades. "The site has witnessed social, economic and ritual transformations across periods and can help us understand these shifts," she says. She adds that the loss of evidence due to destruction or neglect creates critical gaps in the global understanding of human evolution and early prehistory.

"To present an accurate account of human evolution and trace the dispersal of hominins out of Africa to East Asia, Australia and beyond, conserving India's prehistoric sites is essential. Unfortunately, very little effort is being made to protect these sites or encourage additional scientific investigation," she explains.

Her research site lies on private farmland under dry cultivation. The fields reveal hundreds of pottery fragments and other artefacts dating back nearly 5,000 years. The nearby hills host rock carvings and paintings of bulls, humans and festive scenes — all unprotected.

Tekkalakote is also home to one of Karnataka's many ash mounds, although many have now been destroyed. Local landowners have requested fencing to protect the ash mound, but neither the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) nor the DAMH has acted in over four years.

The region's importance is further underscored by the presence of two of Karnataka's 13 Ashokan rock edicts. While one minor edict has already been destroyed because of fire; another one of these early Brahmi inscriptions (among the earliest decipherable inscriptions in South Asia) is fading due to natural causes. Only a tin roof offers token protection — without fencing or proper signage, contrary to ASI norms.

Lack of plans

Karnataka has 1,453 notified protected monuments under the ASI and DAMH. Under the Samrakshane Scheme meant to identify, restore and protect heritage structures not listed by the ASI or DAMH, the state identified over 25,000 heritage structures, including temples, ancient sites, memorials and others for conservation. Effective conservation of these structures is possible only after a monument is officially recognised and notified as protected. However, none of these monuments identified through village surveys, conducted between 2017 and 2022, have been notified so far.

Prof Ravi Korisettar, noted archeologist and honorary director of the Robert Bruce Foote Sanganakallu Archaeological Museum in Ballari, says the state, like many others, has neglected its prehistoric sites. "We don't know the total number of sites here. Many have already been lost and most surviving ones remain unprotected. Despite their crucial role in understanding human evolution, Karnataka lacks both long-term and short-term policies for prehistoric site protection," he points out.

The Sanganakallu Neolithic site was protected from granite mining due to the efforts of successive deputy commissioners of Ballari. Such efforts are needed across the state's prehistoric sites, he adds.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in its 2024 report — Preservation and Conservation of State Protected Historical Monuments and Antiquities in Karnataka — paints a grim picture too. It says the department has not formulated any long-term plan or priority list for excavation, preservation and conservation of monuments. As a result, it has no mechanism to assess the funds or human resources required to carry out explorations, excavations, conservation of ancient monuments and other essential activities.

Tracing the missing link

Currently, only six to eight archaeologically significant sites in Karnataka are under excavation.

"Excavation is crucial in archaeology as it transforms buried remains into meaningful historical knowledge," explains Hemanth Kadambi, Associate Professor of History and Archaeology at Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi. Along with researchers Andrew Bauer from the US and Peter Johansen from Canada, he has been studying the Neolithic site at Maski, Raichur.

"Maski is significant because it shows continuous occupation, connecting prehistoric cultures with later historical periods. The site provides evidence of Neolithic habitation, including polished stone tools, axes, blades and early farming and animal domestication, illustrating the shift from hunting-gathering to settled village life," he says.

Yet, locals recently used earth-moving machines to dig the area for temple construction and miscreants have defaced rock carvings near Mallikarjun Hill.

Prof Basavaraj Kodagunti of the Central University of Karnataka says that despite Maski's significance, no protection measures have been taken. "A temple with no historical reference is being built on a site where invaluable Neolithic evidence was found," he notes. He adds that during the Nizam period, a large-scale excavation left 20 acres of land untouched for over eight decades due to its importance. The land is now being developed into a new layout.

Neglect is not confined to North Karnataka's arid regions; central and coastal Karnataka face similar threats.

Avalakki Pare and Buddhanajeddu in Udupi's Kundapur taluk, home to over 20 unique rock artworks, form an important petroglyph site. Prof T Murugeshi of MSRS College, Shirva, whose team discovered the site, says the rock carvings are at least a few thousand years old. "Despite being inside Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, these artworks are being vandalised," he notes.

Red tape vs research

Experts say a key reason Karnataka struggles to protect its prehistoric sites is the lack of research and excavation. With limited human and financial resources, neither the ASI nor DAMH can undertake large-scale studies.

"How can we protect a site when we don't even know what it holds?" asks Shahapur-based researcher Aruni S K.

According to the CAG report, between 2017 and 2022, the DAMH received a budget of Rs 147 crore, of which it spent Rs 123 crore. Of this, only 1.28% was allocated for maintenance of 844 monuments under DAMH, including prehistoric sites.

Multiple ASI officials confirmed to *DH* that excavation, one of the agency's most critical tasks, receives the lowest priority. "Limited human resources and skilled labour across multiple ASI circles in the state have reduced officials to clerical roles rather than field experts," says one officer, requesting anonymity.

For private researchers, securing permission from the ASI and DAMH is a herculean task. Some have waited months, even years, for excavation approvals.

"After multiple levels of scrutiny, the department grants approval for a maximum of one year for excavation. By the time we receive approval, the ideal time period for excavation often passes. This year, I received approval three months late. The monsoon prevented me from starting work, leaving only a 20-day window to complete the excavation. This lack of time will affect our study and may prevent us from achieving desired results," says a senior archaeologist working in North Karnataka.

Some researchers, however, defend the ASI's strict scrutiny for excavation permissions, citing cases where artefacts found at excavation sites were taken away without government knowledge and subsequently misused. "Regulations for obtaining permissions are stringent as national treasures must be safeguarded and not mishandled," says Hemanth Kadambi.

Namita Sugandhi says granting more excavation permissions to credible researchers would provide archaeology students with hands-on experience in proper archaeological methodology.

Rashmi, a History and Archaeology student at Central University of Karnataka, Kalaburagi, and a resident of Tekkalakote, says that working for a week with Namita taught her more archaeological concepts than her entire first semester. "Very few of my classmates get this opportunity, as Karnataka is not conducting large-scale excavations," she adds.

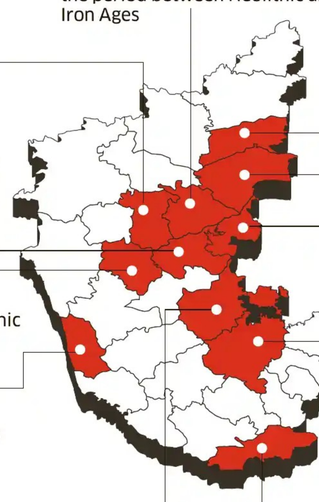
DAMH Commissioner A Devaraj refuted claims that Karnataka has neglected its prehistoric sites. "Over the past one-and-a-half years, our officials, in consultation with external archaeologists, have compiled details of Karnataka's prehistoric sites. We are publishing a coffee-table book listing all these sites, set to release in about a month," he says.

He also denies claims of insufficient funding for conservation or excavation. "The department, in collaboration with experts from national and foreign universities, has been conducting research. Excavations are underway at Rajaghatta, Maski, BR Hills, Brahmagiri and other sites," he says.

He also dismisses claims that researchers face bureaucratic delays in obtaining permissions. "Excavations can only begin after the monsoon. We ask researchers to submit applications in advance so they can start work by winter. There is no intention of denying research, as such studies also benefit the department," he says.

For now, Karnataka's prehistoric heritage continues to erode slowly, awaiting recognition before it vanishes entirely.

Prehistoric heritage in peril



GADAG
- **Anagwadi and Singatalur**
*Mesolithic microlithic tools

VIJAYANAGARA
- **Hampi region**
*Mesolithic rock shelters and early habitation evidence along the Tungabhadra

HAVERI
- **Hallur**
Shows transition from *Neolithic to Megalithic cultures

UDUPI
- **Kundapur**
Over 20 unique rock artworks of petroglyph (prehistoric carving) found at Avalakki Pare, Buddhanajeddu, Gavali and Baradakallu Bole inside the Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary

CHITRADURGA
- **Brahmagiri**
One of the first Neolithic sites excavated in South India; has evidence of early farming and ash mounds

KOPPAL
- **Piklihal**
Known for cattle domestication and ash mounds
- **Hire Benakal**
A megalithic site currently in the temporary list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It roughly has 400 funerary monuments dated to the period between Neolithic and Iron Ages

CHAMARAJANAGAR
- **BR Hills region**
Prehistoric habitation and microlithic tools

YADGIR
- **Isampur**
One of the earliest *Acheulian sites in India, known for stone tool manufacturing
- **Hunasagi-Baichbal valley**
A globally significant Paleolithic and Mesolithic complex with evidence of early human occupation

RAICHUR
- **Maski**
Known for both prehistoric remains and later Ashokan inscriptions

BALLARI
- **Sanganakallu-Kupgal complex**
Famous for Neolithic ash mounds, rock art and early iron usage
- **Tekkalakote**
Important Neolithic and Megalithic site with evidence of early iron smelting
- **Kupgal Hill**
Rock art, cup marks and musical stones associated with Neolithic cultures

TUMAKURU
- **Kibbanahalli**
Paleolithic stone tools discovered along river terraces

*Paleolithic: Age ranged from 2.5 million years ago to 10,000 years ago

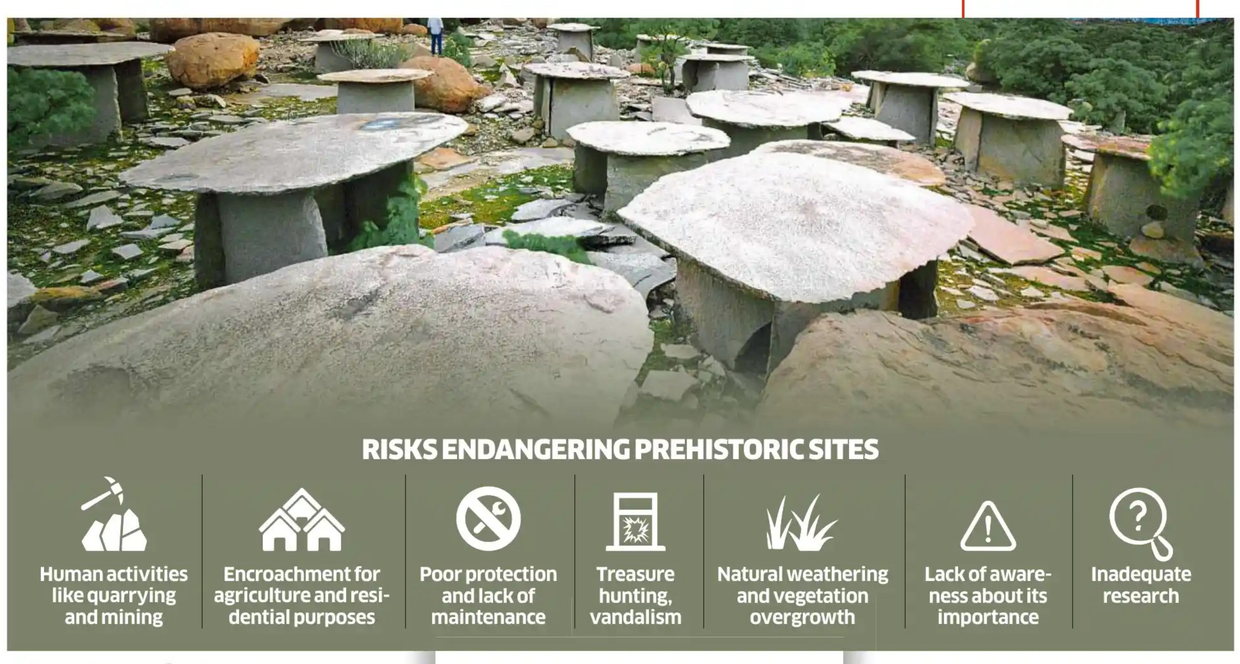
*Mesolithic: Age followed the Palaeolithic age, 8,000 BC to 3,000 BC

*Neolithic: Age when humans began using fine and polished stone tools, around 3,000 BC to 1,000 BC

*Acheulian: Age characterised by stone tool production

Karnataka's prehistoric period sites

- Prehistoric studies in India began in 1836 with the discovery of ash mounds at Kupgal and Kudathini in the Ballari region, then part of the Madras Presidency, by Cuebold, a British officer
- Common artefacts recovered from excavations are pot sherds, sculptures, inscriptions, sling balls, seals, terracotta cakes, wheels, pestles, stone tools, coins, metal remains, precious and semi-precious stones, ivory objects, combs, decorated bone pieces, ornaments etc



RISKS ENDANGERING PREHISTORIC SITES

- Human activities like quarrying and mining
- Encroachment for agriculture and residential purposes
- Poor protection and lack of maintenance
- Treasure hunting, vandalism
- Natural weathering and vegetation overgrowth
- Lack of awareness about its importance
- Inadequate research

Lost to neglect

- A CAG audit report (2017–22) found that excavation, identification and assessment of archaeological remains are ineffective due to the lack of clear guidelines
- The Dept of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage neither prepares the Annual Conservation Plan as mandated under the ASI's National Conservation Policy nor has any long- or medium-term plans to carry out its activities
- The Department has no established procedures or guidelines for selecting excavation sites in its annual action plans
- The absence of a well-maintained and updated directory of archaeological sites in Karnataka undermines effective conservation

Archaeological sites

119	97	22
Archaeological sites in Karnataka including prehistoric	State protected sites	ASI protected sites

14% of prehistoric sites missing

Villages* where pre-historic sites are missing	District
Taivathivi, Halmardi, Agalgi, Kottur	Kalaburagi
Guddaru, Machnur, Halapur, Homballi, Lingasugur	Raichur

*Audit of 94 monuments in eight districts found that 13 prehistoric/Neolithic sites could not be located and some were not found at their recorded locations

Meagre allocation for essential maintenance activities

- Out of **Rs 146.81 crore** allocated for the five years ending 2021–22, the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage spent **Rs 81.58 crore** on core preservation and conservation activities
- During the five year period, administrative expenditure accounted for **28.18%** of total allocation and constituted **30.10** % of total expenditure
- A meagre funds amounting to **Rs 39.00 lakh** were allocated for maintenance of monuments including pre-historic sites
- **Rs 23.17 crore** of the total budget remained unspent. This included **Rs 7.90 crore** meant for conservation

Source: CAG report, 'A Glance on archaeological remains of Karnataka', media reports

COMPILED BY **DIVYASHRI MUDAKAVI** DH GRAPHIC: **GURU PRASATH R**

'Ballari museum model may shape artefact conservation'

In conversation with *DH*'s **Pavan Kumar H**, Karnataka Tourism Minister **H K Patil** outlines the challenges and the path forward for conserving the state's prehistoric sites. Excerpts:

With over 90% of Karnataka's prehistoric sites in a dilapidated condition, what efforts are underway to protect them?
It was only after I took charge as Tourism Minister that prominence was given to prehistoric sites in Karnataka. After visiting the Hire Benakal megalithic site in Koppal, I ensured the provision of basic facilities and protection. I also made sure that information about the significance of the site reached lawmakers, officials and enthusiasts through an exhibition at the Vidhana Soudha. Similar efforts will be undertaken for all prehistoric sites in the state.

The state government has announced excavation plans at Lakkundi, Rajaghatta and other prehistoric sites, but no visible progress has been made...
The excavation work at multiple prehistoric sites is on. At Lakkundi, the department has called for tender and work will commence soon. Due to the monsoon, we could not take up the excavation as rules do not permit us. I will ensure that research work at all the major sites, for which permission has been given, is completed at the earliest, so that conservation work can follow.

Researchers say obtaining excavation permissions in Karnataka is difficult due to long delays and red tape. How do you respond?
The state does not permit individual researchers to carry out excavations independently, as there have been cases of some individuals making away with some important artefacts. All excavation work must be coordinated with the Department. While we are open to collaborating with researchers and granting them access for study, obtaining permissions from the ASI in Delhi has become challenging, even for state-sponsored projects.

Are there efforts to preserve prehistoric artefacts scientifically, given that many are currently held by private individuals?
Due to the lack of quality museums, many artefacts are being stored in universities and research centres. It is preferable to preserve them scientifically in private spaces than to leave them in government godowns. Ballari has one private museum. The government will take steps to set up similar museums if the Ballari museum model is feasible. Ultimately, our national treasures should be under government care.

Environment responsibility, from Page 1

Expanding corporate liability for environmental stewardship

The current 2025 judgment extends this focus on energy goals by framing it within a duty-based approach to balance environmental protection with sustainable development.

This duty flows from the constitutional mandate and is not charity for the people or the environment. By viewing it through a Constitutional lens, the court expanded the ambit of corporate liability and accountability towards environmental stewardship.

Statutory obligation

By interpreting 'a citizen' under Article 51A(g) to include legal persons such as companies, the court sought to elevate the corporate sector's statutory responsibility under the Companies Act, 2013 into a constitutional mandate. Under Section 135 of the Act, companies meeting specified financial thresholds must spend on socially responsible activities, including environmental sustainability and ecological balance.

This statutory obligation reflects the principle that the industrial and corporate sector owes social obligations to communities for distributive justice. The court reinforced this by holding that social responsibility includes a firm commitment to environmental protection. It expanded two key aspects: first, by interpreting 'community' to include the natural world and recognising the link between human activities and planetary health; and second, by treating ecological protection as part of social responsibility, underscoring ecological justice and the idea of holding natural resources in 'public trust' for present and future generations.

Through these observations, the court affirmed that the CSR mandate is not charity to the community or the environment; it is a statutory obligation grounded in constitutional commitment.

Many challenges

Given the ongoing debates over air pollution in Delhi and the responsibility of both State and non-State actors for climate change impacts, the Supreme Court's ruling on corporate environmental responsibility is particularly timely.

This expansive interpretation of corporate social responsibility to include environmental obligations strengthens the case for corporate accountability for environmental harm.

Fundamental rights jurisprudence in India has traditionally been State-centric, with individuals able to sue the State only for violations of fundamental rights. Likewise, the fundamental duty under Article 51A(g) was limited to citizens, restricting this duty to human beings. With the current judgment, the court is now setting a new trend with two key aspects: first, by expanding the meaning of 'citizen' under Article 51A(g) to include legal persons in the ambit of the duty towards the environment; and second, by bringing the industry and corporate sector within the constitutional mandate to protect and conserve nature.

Bringing environmental responsibility into corporate social responsibility expands the corporate sector's accountability to include broader societal, statutory and constitutional goals of environmental protection. It reinforces environmental duties not just under existing environmental laws but also within corporate regulatory frameworks.

Recognising a rights-based approach and corporate environmental responsibility broadens the scope for attributing climate responsibility to the industrial sector. This could lead to novel climate litigation against polluting industries, distinct from the traditional focus on litigation against the State.

However, this development is not without challenges and ambiguities. Although corporate environmental responsibility has been read into CSR, its scope is limited to companies that are statutorily required to spend CSR funds. It remains unclear how environmental responsibility could be extended to companies outside the CSR mandate, especially small and marginal sector units that also contribute to environmental harm. These smaller units, which often lack the financial and technical capacity to adopt cleaner technologies, could exacerbate the concerns of climate change and its consequent impacts.

What is the extent and scope of environmental responsibility under the CSR mandate for these companies? Given that the Court has not attempted to explain this in the judgment, ambiguities in interpretation are likely to result.

Incorporating CSR funds into the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) fund could bring more resources to environmental conservation. However, it could also become a licence for polluting industries to pay the amount and escape further responsibility for the harm they cause. While this integration might appear to strengthen the polluter-pays principle, it also allows companies to fulfil their obligations by paying into a central fund and shift the responsibility for adopting direct measures for environmental protection and conservation to the State.

The State is now placed at the centre of responsibility for environmental protection, mitigating climate change impacts and ensuring a cleaner environment for all. This could weaken corporate accountability and responsibility towards the environment and the earth. To address these ambiguities and implementation challenges, the court needs to provide further clarification through its judicial activism.

(Gayathri D Naik is Assistant Professor and Co-Director, Centre for Environmental Law Education, Research and Advocacy, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru)

Will need Rs 20k cr in 5 yrs for new rural job scheme: K'taka

Minister Priyank Kharge says Centre didn't consult states on fiscal burden

Villagers desilt a lake under the MGNREGA scheme at a village in Dharwad district. DH FILE

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka will have to spend about Rs 20,000 crore over five years to implement the Union govrnment's new rural employment scheme, Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge said on Saturday, slamming the Modi administration for not consulting states before introducing the new law.

The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), requires states to bear 40% of funding. Earlier, the Centre bore the full cost.

"There's an unnecessary burden being placed on states. Every year, we'll have to pay Rs 3,000-4,000 crore. That means about Rs 20,000 crore over five years," Priyank said at a news conference, adding that the burden on states was not discussed with the 16th Finance Commission.

"You want Kannadigas to fulfill your Viksit Bharat dream. But what will Kannadigas get? *Chombu* (empty vessel)," Priyank said.

"In the last 2.5 years, about 17 lakh village-level assets were created by panchayats under the MGNREGA and 80 lakh households were provided with livelihoods. We spent Rs 21,144 crore," Priyank said.

The new VB-G Ram G law curtails the rights of both workers and panchayats, Priyank said.

"Under the MGNREGA, one could work throughout the year. Under the new law, however, there won't be any work for 60 days during peak agriculture season, citing shortage of farm labour," Priyank said. "What data do they [Union government] have to say that there's a shortage of agricultural labour?"

The new law moves towards "contractor-led" projects, he charged. "The Bill also says that works must be aligned with the master plans of PM Gati Shakti, which deals with only big projects. What about small village-level works?" he asked.

"In the last 19-20 years, the rural employment guarantee scheme provided livelihoods, which the Modi administration has snatched," the minister said.

"An NREGA job card gave me the right to seek employment anywhere in the country. But now, the scheme has gone from demand-based to supply-based," he said, claiming that the Centre will eventually roll back the VB-G RAM G law.

What K'taka govt says

- Karnataka will have to spend Rs 3,000-4,000 cr annually
- In 2025-26, state targeted 9 cr person days under MGNREGA
- State created 6.42 cr person days of jobs till Dec 5
- In last 2.5 yrs, 17L village-level assets created
- 80L households provided with livelihoods
- New law curtails rights of workers and panchayats
- VB-G RAM G is contractor-centric

"Before deciding that the cost-sharing ratio would be 60:40, were states consulted? If PM Modi dreams about a Bill at night, tables [it] the next morning and passes in the afternoon, should states simply accept it?

PRIYANK KHARGE, Panchayat Raj Minister

Cong to launch protests

The Congress on Saturday announced a nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' from January 5 next year, claiming the BJP-led Union government will have to face people's anger as the new law is aimed at taking money away from the poor and hand it over to industrialists.

Details on Page 9

Pushpa 2 stampede: Allu Arjun named in chargesheet

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

Telugu film actor Allu Arjun

Telugu actor Allu Arjun has been named in the chargesheet pertaining to the 2024 Sandhya Theatre stampede case that claimed one life and left a child critically injured.

The Hyderabad police have named Allu Arjun as Accused No. 11, along with 22 others, including members of his personal staff and the management of Sandhya Theatre, in the chargesheet, which was filed before the 9th Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) at Nampally Court.

With the filing of the chargesheet, the case has now entered the trial phase.

The incident occurred on the night of December 4, 2024, during the premiere of Pushpa 2, when a massive crowd gathered at the Sandhya Theatre at RTC X Roads to catch a glimpse of the actor.

The chaos led to a stampede that killed 35-year-old M Revathi and left her nine-year-old son, Sritej, critically injured due to oxygen deprivation.

TRAGEDY AT THEATRE

- Apart from Arjun, chargesheet names his personal manager, staff members, and eight private security personnel
- The theatre management has also been accused of negligence, particularly for failing to ensure separate entry and exit points for VIP guests
- According to police, the tragedy resulted from gross negligence and failure to adhere to prescribed safety protocols

"Investigation into the Sandhya Theatre stampede case has been completed," said Hyderabad Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar on Saturday.

▸ **Allu Arjun, Page 8**

SPEAKING UP

- Sources say Digvijaya raised concerns over the decision-making process
- Complains that there is "a lot of over-centralisation" in Cong
- Senior leader says RSS and BJP have a strong organisation
- Adds that Congress needs to strengthen itself if it has to fight saffron party

Digvijaya causes stir, praises BJP-RSS, posts Modi pic

Ahead of CWC meet, Cong leader flags party issues with Rahul

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh arrives for the CWC meet in New Delhi. PTI

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Saturday created a flutter just ahead of a Congress Working Committee meeting by praising RSS-BJP's system of promoting grassroot workers to leadership by citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's case even as he told his party leadership the perils of "over centralisation" that is harming the organisation.

Around 45 minutes before the CWC meeting at 10.30 am, Singh posted on 'X' an "impressive picture" of Modi sitting at the foot of L K Advani on a digital platform and said that such a grassroots RSS-BJP worker become the chief minister of the state and the prime minister of the country.

"This is the power of the organisation. Jai Siya Ram," he said, triggering speculation about what message Singh intends to send to the leadership ahead of the meeting called to discuss the repeal of MGNREGA and other issues.

Amid reports that Singh was upset with the organisational revamp in Madhya Pradesh, where he was CM for two terms, a post pinned on his 'X' profile added to the puzzle as it appeared to complain about top leader Rahul Gandhi's alleged reluctance to change his position on organisational matters.

▸ **Digvijaya Singh, Page 8**

Cong leadership flags Kogilu demolition

The Congress high command on Saturday expressed concern over the demolition of unauthorised constructions in Kogilu in Bengaluru and asked CM Siddaramaiah to implement relief measures for the affected families.

Details on Page 5B

36 wickets in under 2 days: MCG pitch draws heavy flak

BENGALURU, DHNS: Despite ending on the right side of a Test match result for the first time in 15 years in Australia, England skipper Ben Stokes took potshots at the overwhelmingly bowler-friendly Melbourne pitch on which 20 wickets fell on Day 1 and 16 on Day 2, saying such a track elsewhere in the world would have attracted a heavy flak.

Ben Stokes

Stokes wasn't alone in the criticism of the MCG pitch as he was joined by his former team-mate Kevin Pietersen and former Indian cricketer Dinesh Karthik.

"I'm pretty sure if that was somewhere else in the world, there'd be hell on. Not the best thing for games that should be played over five days."

Asked specifically if he was talking about spin-friendly pitches in Asia, Stokes replied rather tongue-in-cheek, "Your words, not mine."

▸ **MCG pitch, Page 8**

Jakkur service road to ease traffic to KIA

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a boost to the city's northern connectivity, the National Highways Authority of India has completed the long-awaited Jakkur service road. The road is now open and promises to decongest one of the most notorious bottlenecks on the way to Kempegowda International Airport.

Details on Page 4

Day after wife's suicide in B'luru, man hangs self in Nagpur

BENGALURU, DHNS

Ganavi and Suraj at their wedding.

In a tragic fallout of the suicide of a newlywed woman in Bengaluru, her husband also killed himself in Nagpur while his mother attempted suicide, police officials said.

Ganavi (26) had attempted suicide at her parents' house in Bengaluru's Ramamurthynagar on December 24 and died at a private hospital on the night of December 25. After her death, her husband Suraj, his mother Jayanti and brother Sanjay had left for Nagpur.

On December 26, Ganavi's parents and relatives staged a protest by placing her body in front of Suraj's house, demanding the arrest of those responsible for her death.

Police had booked Suraj and his family members under the Dowry Prohibition Act.

According to the FIR, a grand reception was organised at the Palace Grounds on October 29, with the woman's family spending Rs 40 lakh. But soon after the wedding, she was allegedly harassed for more dowry.

The couple had travelled to Sri Lanka for a 10-day honeymoon but returned to Bengaluru within five days after frequent arguments.

After the FIR and the flash protest, Suraj was found dead in a hotel room in Nagpur in the early hours of December 27.

The police said Suraj was found hanging in the hotel room when the hotel staff came to check on him. No death note has been recovered yet. His mother Jayanti also attempted suicide but has survived and is undergoing treatment in a hospital, they added.

Bandipur forest staffer dies in tiger attack

MYSURU, DHNS: A staffer of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve was killed in a tiger attack near the Maralahalla anti-poaching camp area of Bandipur range, Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Saturday.

The deceased has been identified as Sannahaida (56), a camp watcher. The incident occurred while he was patrolling. The tiger, which was in a bush, is said to have attacked him on the head from behind, said Conservator of Forest, BTR, S Prabhakaran.

Sannahaida

The tiger did not devour any portion of his body, which only bore some scratch marks, sources said.

Condoling his death, Minister for Environment, Ecology and Forests Eshwar B Khandre said his family will be provided Rs 45 lakh, including insurance and ex-gratia.

5 in contention for posthumous K'taka Ratna honour

BENGALURU, DHNS: The list of winners of the 'Karnataka Ratna' award, the state's highest civilian honour, could expand with the government under pressure to consider posthumously recognising five persons, including environmentalist Saalumarada Thimmakka and senior lawmaker Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

The government is examining a proposal to posthumously give the award to actor-politician Ambareesh and former CM S M Krishna. The government will also have to decide on calls that have been made to honour writer S L Bhyrappa with the award.

Details on Page 7

SLOW CHARGED

EV infra growth tepid beyond B'luru and a few dists

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka government's efforts to install charging stations for electric vehicles across the state appear to be meeting with limited success as most of the infrastructure is concentrated in and around Bengaluru only.

This is despite Karnataka having the highest number of EV charging stations in the country.

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) had floated tenders for setting up EV charging stations in all 31 districts under public-private partnership (PPP).

But even after multiple extensions, private companies have come forward to set up EV charging stations only in nine districts.

Bescom officials believe the lukewarm response could be due to poor EV penetration in other districts.

Under the PPP model, Bescom identifies government offices and buildings where charging stations can be set up, while private companies put in place the infrastructure. A revenue-sharing model is worked out based on the demand.

"Companies say it's not viable to set up stations in all districts because of the low number of EVs there," a senior Bescom official told *DH*.

LONG WAY TO GO

Positive response for infra in Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Mysuru, Dakshina Kannada, Hassan, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Haveri and Belagavi

5,963
Total EV charging stations in K'taka

283
Set up by escoms

4,400-4,800
Charging stations in Bengaluru

The nine districts where Bescom has received responses are Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Mysuru, Dakshina Kannada, Hassan, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, Haveri and Belagavi.

A total of 585 charging stations and 1,170 EV chargers will be installed in these districts. Charging stations outside Bengaluru are crucial in promoting EVs for long-distance travel.

"We are setting up charging stations on state and national highways. We have sent a proposal to the NHAI, seeking permission to set up charging stations on NH 48 (Bengaluru-Pune highway). Similarly, we have written to the Karnataka Road Development Corporation Limited, seeking help to set up charging stations on state highways," another senior official said.

Bescom is also planning to set up charging stations at tourist destinations to help travellers.

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WIDENING CRACKS 30,000 potholes filled, yet durability remains the real test

At Rs 5,500 cr spend, can B'luru build roads that last?

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

If one issue dominated Bengaluru's civic conversation through 2025, it was the state of its roads.

Potholes became not just an inconvenience but a public safety concern — particularly for two-wheeler users, who form the bulk of the city's daily commuters. Many accidents were officially linked to cratered roads, reinforcing a sense that commuting had become a gamble rather than a right.

Faced with mounting public outcry, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) allocated Rs 65 crore solely for pothole repairs. Within three months, it claimed to have filled more than 30,000 craters across the city. While the scale of the exercise was unmatched in recent years, questions over quality and longevity followed almost immediately.

Public anger over bad roads also pushed the government to announce a grant of Rs 1,241 crore for relaying roads, bundled with associated works such as desilting roadside drains, building shoulder drains, replacing missing kerbs, repairing drain slabs, and fixing damaged footpaths. In addition, the government approved Rs 900 crore for resurfacing 650 km of ward roads or neighbourhood streets.

Both projects are slated to be completed by April–May 2026.

As workers fill potholes and budgets balloon, the city's road test is far from over. DH FILE PHOTO

Beyond these two announcements, several other road programmes are scheduled to conclude by the end of 2026. These include asphalting works worth Rs 694 crore, Rs 274 crore for upgrades to 12 high-density corridors, and white-topping of 141 km of roads at an estimated cost of Rs 1,700 crore. Another Rs 450 crore has been earmarked for the development of an 18-km stretch of the Outer Ring Road, which houses one of the city's largest employment hubs.

Altogether, road-related expenditure in 2026 alone is pegged at Rs 5,259 crore, excluding flyovers, elevated corridors, and tunnel roads. When ongoing works to build new roads along stormwater drain buffer zones — covering about 63 km at a cost of Rs 200 crore — are included, the figure rises further.

Senior officials maintain that the scale of spending will finally reflect on the ground.

Additional Chief Secretary for Urban Development Tushar Girinath said road conditions would be "significantly better" in 2026, adding that parallel investments in waste management, LED street lighting, wastewater treatment, and flood mitigation would also be taken up at full scale.

"We will get to see visible improvements in a year's time," he promised.

A familiar pattern

Yet, Bengaluru has been here before. In the run-up to the 2023 Assembly elections, the then BJP-led government released approximately Rs 6,000 crore exclusively for roadworks. Around Rs 3,000 crore of this went into ward-level asphalting, with MLAs receiving substantial allocations in what was widely seen as an election-year push.

Those investments, however, delivered only temporary relief.

Within two years, road conditions had once again deteriorated — suggesting that high spending alone does not guarantee durable outcomes. For ordinary citizens, commuting in the city remains a struggle.

As of 2025, Bengaluru has over 1.2 crore registered vehicles, with private vehicles continuing to dominate daily travel even as Namma Metro expands slowly.

According to a recent report by Unboxing BLR, a not-for-profit organisation, Bengaluru has become the third fastest-growing car market in India over the last decade, overtaking Greater Mumbai and trailing only Pune and Delhi NCR.

Contractors & concerns

Among the many reasons for public scepticism, Clement Jayakumar, a member of the Mahadevapura Taskforce, pointed to the repeated allotment of roadworks to the same contractors — despite large backlogs.

"Works keep getting allotted to the same contractors even when they have unfinished projects. A contractor with Rs 10 crore or Rs 20 crore worth of pending roadworks should never be given fresh contracts," he said. He also called for mandatory disclosure boards at worksites, displaying contractor and engineer details, to enable local monitoring.

For RK Mishra, the demand is basic.

"2026 and beyond should be a year of accountability and responsibility. Mere announcements of roadworks are not enough. The civic body must create a dashboard to publish project progress. It should carry real details — not vague percentages. Otherwise, we will see nothing on the ground, and the contractors will be happy to pin all the blame on delayed payments," he said.

The grand allocations also come at a time when Bengaluru's civic body polls have been delayed by over five years. Urbanist Ashwin Mahesh said he hopes 2026 will finally see elections to the city's municipal corporations.

Independent mobility expert Satya Arikutharam believes the focus must shift from project announcements to institutional reform. He argues that operationalising the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) and updating the Comprehensive Mobility Plan are prerequisites for rational decision-making. Without such oversight, he says, infrastructure proposals — including those pushed by Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE) — must be halted.

Man held for molesting woman at crowded mall on Christmas night

BENGALURU, DHNS

A woman was allegedly molested at Phoenix Marketcity in eastern Bengaluru during Christmas celebrations on Wednesday night.

Police tracked down the suspect, identified as 27-year-old Manuj Chand. He was produced before a magistrate and remanded to judicial custody, police said.

The 27-year-old woman was part of the festive crowd at the shopping mall in Mahadevapura when Chand allegedly approached her from behind around 9.30 pm, touched her inappropriately, and fled before security guards could intervene.

The woman, who works at a private company, later filed a complaint at the Mahadevapura police station.

Police examined CCTV footage from the mall and nearby areas to identify and trace Chand, a Guwahati native working as a Swiggy delivery executive in Bengaluru.

One of the woman's friends said the incident happened "in a flash" amid the celebrations.

"The three of us had gone to the mall to celebrate Christmas. The event was organised by the mall management and music was playing. While everyone was enjoying the programme, this man walked through the crowd, came from behind, and touched our friend in an inappropriate manner. She was shocked and screamed to alert us," he told *DH*.

He added that one of their friends managed to catch hold of the suspect and slapped him, but four men came to his aid and helped him escape before security guards could act.

"We immediately informed the mall security guards, but despite our efforts, he and his friends ran away," he said.

Man murders wife as she refuses to quit her job at massage parlour

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 41-year-old man in north Bengaluru allegedly murdered his wife and later walked into a police station to surrender, police officials said.

The incident occurred on December 25 at Agrahara Layout in D. Sampigehalli, near Yelahanka. Police said the couple frequently quarrelled over the woman's employment at a massage parlour.

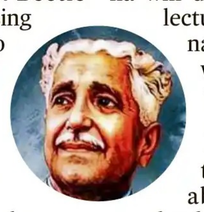
The deceased has been identified as 39-year-old Ayesha S. Her husband, Syed Zabi, was reportedly unhappy with her job at the massage parlour and had asked her to quit, leading to constant friction in their marriage.

Zabi was Ayesha's third husband, while she was his second wife. On Christmas night, the couple allegedly had another argument over the same issue. In a fit of rage, Zabi allegedly picked up a knife and slit her throat, killing her on the spot, police said.

After the murder, Zabi went to the Yelahanka police station in the early hours of the morning to surrender and narrated the incident. He was later handed over to the Sampigehalli police, as the crime fell under their jurisdiction.

Special lecture on Kuvempu's birth anniversary tomorrow

BENGALURU, DHNS: Beetle Book Shop is organising a special lecture to commemorate the birth anniversary of the legendary Kannada poet and writer Kuvempu on Monday.



The event will celebrate 100 years of Kuvempu's poem, 'Bommanahalliyinda Kindara Jogi', published in 1926.

Cultural thinker K V Narayana will deliver the keynote lecture and author Vanamala Vishwanath, who translated Kuvempu's 'Malegalalli Madhumagalu' to English (Bride in the Hills) will speak about Narayana's book, 'Hosa Odugarige Kuvempu' (translates to Kuvempu for new age readers).

On December 29, 5 pm at Beetle Book House, Vijayanagar. Entry free, open to all.

Youth killed after bike rams into tree

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 22-year-old rider was killed on the spot after his bike crashed into a tree near Dombarahalli in north Bengaluru on Christmas night. The deceased was identified as Shyam, a city resident who worked as a driver at the RMC Yard.

According to the police, the incident occurred late on Wednesday night. Shyam had left his home earlier that morning on a KTM bike (KA-50-EC-5967) to celebrate the festival with friends in Shivajinagar. After spending the day out, he was reportedly heading towards Ganapathi Layout when the accident took place.

Investigating officers said Shyam was riding in a rash and reckless manner. While navigating the stretch from Dombarahalli Circle, he lost control of the two-wheeler and rammed into a tree on the left side of the road. The impact was so severe that Shyam sustained fatal head injuries and died instantly.

The accident came to light only the following morning when passersby spotted the wreckage and alerted the authorities.

The Madanayakanahalli police have registered a case under Sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Second Ayurveda World Conference: 9 am Ceremony: Presence: Jayendra Saraswati Shankaracharya Swami, Guests: U T Khader, C N Ashwath Narayan, Closing Ceremony at 5 pm, Siddaramaiah, H D Kumaraswamy, V Somanna and Basavaraj Horatti to attend: Kaje Ayurvedic Charitable Foundation: Royal Senate and The Grand Castle, Palace Grounds (Gate No 6).

Dr C Ashwath's birthday celebration: N Chaluvarayaswamy, T N Sitaram, Chandra Ashwatha, Kikkeri Krishnamurthy, Y.K. Muddakrishna, B R Laxman Rao, Srinivasa Udupa to be present: Sanskrit Foundation: Dr C Ashwath Kalabhavan, N R Colony; 5.30 pm.

CULTURAL

Kuvempu Mahotsava: Inauguration: Purushottam Bilimale: H C Boralingaiah and Appagere Somashekar, Honorees: V Gopalagowda, H M Venkatappa, Venkateshamurthy, S T Ramegowda and Shankaregowda take part; Navakarnataka Yuva Shakti; Sri Adichunchanagiri Community Hall, Vijayanagar; 3 pm.

Kappanna Angala Tenth Anniversary: 'Kuvempu Baraha Baduku' lecture; 'Swapna Siddhi' Drama Performance: Directed by: Joseph Neenasam; Kappanna Courtyard, 5.30 pm.

Bharathanatya Ranga Pravesha: Anya Rao: Kaveri Natyagya: ADA Theatre, JC Road; 4 pm.

Margshirshotsava: Musical programme: Shivashri Skandaprasad and team; Surabharathi, HRBR Layout; 6.30 pm.

Swarapaana Music Concert: CreativeClan: Sri Krishnadevaraya Kalamandir; Behind T Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Malleswaram; 4 pm

Invites to be published in this column should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Mist
TEMPERATURES

Maximum	26.6°C
Minimum	15.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	65%
Sunset (Dec 28)	6:02 pm
Sunrise (Dec 29)	6:40 am
Moonrise	11:49 am
Moonset	--:-- pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Airport stretch gets a long-awaited breather; service road opens

Commuters have long complained about the chaotic merge at Jakkur

BENGALURU, DHNS

The newly opened service road at Jakkur. PHOTO: SUNIL HP/X

In a major boost to the city's northern connectivity, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has completed the long-awaited service road at Jakkur.

The project, which had faced several delays, is now open, promising to decongest one of the most bottleneck-prone areas on the way to Kempegowda International Airport.

Commuters from Sahakarnagar and Yelahanka have long complained about the chaotic merge at Jakkur, where local traffic often collides with high-speed airport-bound vehicles. The opening of the service road is expected to effectively segregate local commuters from highway traffic.

"You had to merge into high-speed airport traffic just to go two kilometres down the road," said a cab driver.

Daily commuters who use the stretch to reach Hebbal also expressed satisfaction. "The bottleneck at the aerodrome gate used to add 20 minutes to my commute every morning," said Anirudh S. "With the service road now open, the flow feels much more organised. We just hope the authorities ensure there is no illegal parking here."

Jayaprakash, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic, North), said: "The road has reduced the traffic that previously led to slow movement at Jakkur Cross. We are seeing a significant reduction in peak-hour congestion on the main carriageway now, as local residents will no longer be forced onto the highway for short commutes."

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Three teens held for harassing woman on Silk Board Road

BENGALURU, DHNS: Police have arrested three teenagers, including a minor, for allegedly harassing a young woman — said to be a television actress — on Silk Board Road around midnight on Christmas.

The trio — Roshan, Ayaan, both 19, and the minor — allegedly followed the woman for nearly two kilometres on a motorcycle. They overtook her vehicle and rode in a rash and zig-zag manner to block her path. A fellow commuter filmed the incident on his phone and shared the video on X, tagging the police.

The SG Palya police took up the case after receiving a formal complaint. Following an investigation, they tracked down the trio. Police said the two adults have been remanded in judicial custody.

100 flavours, one bean: Avarebele Mela kicks off in style

BENGALURU, DHNS

The 26th edition of Avarebele Mela kicked off on Saturday at the National College Grounds in Basavanagudi, with over 100 items on the menu.

Despite the afternoon heat, hundreds of people turned up to enjoy hyacinth bean delicacies — from akki roti to jamun, the bean took the form of various sweet and savoury dishes.

While the avarebele dosa remained a crowd favourite, drawing long queues throughout the day, a few experiments like Avarebele kunafa and momos also caught visitors' attention.

The aroma of avarebele delicacies draws large crowds to the National College Grounds on Saturday. DH PHOTO/KISHOR KUMAR BOLAR

For B R Vasudev Murthy, a farmer from Basantpalya in Magadi taluk, ragi mudde with Avarebele saaru remains the favourite. "There are hundreds of dishes on the menu here, but you can feel the true taste of the bean when you make the saaru and enjoy it with ragi mudde," he said.

Murthy and other farmers from villages across Magadi have supplied the Avarebele for this year's festival. At the event, the bean is priced at Rs 250 per kg.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who attended the mela in the afternoon, called Avarebele the "king of all beans" as he relished some Avarebele chaat.

Some of the interesting items on the menu include Avarebele jalebi, ice cream, soup, holige, and dry chaats. Unable to try everything in one day, several patrons said they planned to return to the mela over the weekend.

This year, Vasavi Condiments — which organises the annual mela — has introduced a priority lounge with an unlimited buffet priced at Rs 399.

Additionally, the event will feature live musical performances throughout the day. H20 The Band, All Ok, and Team Gahana are among the artists set to perform. The mela is on until January 4.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of E-TENDER NOTICE No. B/TRD.2025-26/32 Dt: 23.12.2025
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

Item of work	Approx.Value
Conversion of tramway OHE to conventional at Bengaluru yard	Rs. 1,13,21,950.32/-

Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 15.00 hrs on 13.01.2026**
For details log on : www.ireps.gov.in
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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of E-TENDER NOTICE No. B/TRD.2025-26/31 Dt: 23.12.2025
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

Item of work	Approx.Value
[i]OHE modification	Rs. 1,67,87,839.90/-

required for Construction of Track Machine siding at Chikkabanavara, Yediyuru, Shravanabelagola, Nelamangala station length of 420m [ii] OHE modification in connection with the proposed extension of platform BG Nagar PF-1&2 by 16 mtr, Hirisave, PF-1, 2&3 by 20 mtr, Shravanabelagola, PF-1, PF-2&3 by 138m each, Channarayapatna PF-1, 2&3 by 140 mtr and compound wall at Channarayapattana station in Assistant Divisional Engineer/Kunigal subdivision. [iii] Pending works after electrification of Chikkabanavara-Hassan (Gr296) sections of Bengaluru division. [iv] TRD works in connection with Engineering track works in Chikkabanavara-Hassan Section. [v] OHE modifications in connection with proposed construction of RUB (RCC Box size-15x4.5m) at km 14/300-400 at Nelamangala station".
Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 15.00 hrs on 13.01.2026**
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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of E-TENDER NOTICE No. B/TRD.2025-26/33 Dt: 23.12.2025
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

Item of work	Approx.Value
[i]BID-OHE modification	Rs.1,31,47,138.73/-

in connection with provision of proposed Rd-06(Spur Line of 686m) with shunting neck of 650m towards SVC end duly dismantling existing Goods unloading platform adjacent to Rd-5 [ii] OHE modification for Shifting of Y TSS down line PTFE **Period of Completion 10 Months**
Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 15.00 hrs on 13.01.2026**
For details log on : www.ireps.gov.in
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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of E-TENDER NOTICE No. B/TRD.2025-26/30 Dt: 23.12.2025
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

Item of work	Approx.Value
[I] OHE modifications	Rs. 1,46,91,954.11/-

in connection with construction of AC Loco trip shed at Sir M. Visvesvaraya Terminal Bengaluru , [ii] Proposal for replacing Low HT shelter of PF 7&8, provision of shelter in open area between second entry building and platform entrance including granite flooring- TRD works [iii] OHE modifications in connection with Augmentation of AC Loco Trip Shed at Bengaluru [iv] Provision of OHE for pit line no.1 at Bengaluru yard.
Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 15.00 hrs on 13.01.2026**
For details log on : www.ireps.gov.in
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Government of Jharkhand
Urban Development and Housing Department
Dhanbad Municipal Corporation, Dhanbad

e-Procurement Re Tender Notice No. DMC/38/2025-26
NIT No.- DMC/38/2025-26 Date :- 27.12.2025

1.	Name of the work	**Rejuvenation of Ranibandh Talab Under DMC, Dhanbad**
2.	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Rs. **4,16,37,000.00**
3.	Tender Fee and Bid Security	Tender document fee : - INR 10,000/- (Ten Thousand Only) Non-Refundable. Bid Security: Rs **416370.00** (Rupees Four Lakh Sixteen Thousand Three Hundred & Seventy Only).
4.	Time of Completion	330 Days
5.	Date / Time of Publication of Tender on Website	02.01.2026 at 03:00 PM
6.	Start Date of Submission of Bids	02.01.2026 at 03:00 PM
7.	Last Date / Time for receipt of bids Online	21.01.2026 (On line) till 03:00 PM
8.	Date and Time of Technical Bid Opening Online.	22.01.2026 (On line) from 03:00 PM
9.	Name & address of office Inviting tender	Chief Executive Officer, Dhanbad Municipal corporation,Dhanbad.
10.	Helpline number of e-Procurement cell	**8986892064**
11.	e-mail id	**dhanbadmunicipalcorporationadm@gmail.com**

NOTE:- (i) Only e-Tenders will be accepted. Further details can be seen on website http://www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in.
(ii) Contractor should be registered in Class (I) First class as per NIT
(iii) Estimated Cost / Quantity May Vary
(iv) Any Change/Information can be seen on Website on http://www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in.

S/d-
Executive Engineer,
Dhanbad Municipal Corporation, Dhanbad

PR 369520 Urban Development(25-26)#D

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Salient Features of New Time Table of Trains over Eastern Railway (w.e.f. 1st January, 2026)

The new trains, extension, increase in frequency, regularization, change in timings of trains etc. which have been incorporated in the Time Table effective from **1st January, 2026** are appended below :-

1) Extension of Trains:

A. EMU : Fifteen EMU trains will be extended as per following details:-

SL No.	Train No. & Name	Extended upto
1.	37359 Howrah – Arambagh EMU	Goghat
2.	37365 Howrah – Arambagh EMU	Goghat
3.	37367 Howrah – Arambagh EMU	Goghat
4.	37369 Howrah – Arambagh EMU	Goghat
5.	37341 Howrah – Tarakeswar EMU	Goghat
6.	37385 Tarakeswar – Arambagh EMU	Goghat
7.	37396 Arambagh – Tarakeswar EMU	Goghat
8.	37398 Arambagh – Tarakeswar EMU	Goghat
9.	37386 Arambagh – Tarakeswar EMU	Goghat
10.	37354 Tarakeswar – Howrah EMU	Goghat
11.	37360 Arambagh – Howrah EMU	Goghat
12.	37366 Arambagh – Howrah EMU	Goghat
13.	31635 Sealdah - Ranaghat EMU	Shantipur
14.	30113 B.B.D. Bag - Barrackpore EMU	Kalyani
15.	31242 Barrackpore - Sealdah EMU	Kalyani

B. Passenger : Two Passenger trains will be extended as per following details:-

SL No.	Train No. & Name	Extended upto
1.	63063 Barddhaman - Tinpahar MEMU Passenger	Sahibganj
2.	63064 Tinpahar - Barddhaman MEMU Passenger	Sahibganj

2) Frequency Change of EMU Trains:

Sl no.	Train No. & Name	Existing Run	Revised Run	Remarks
1.	33318 Hasnabad - Barasat EMU	6 Days a week	Daily	Increase in Frequency
2.	33321 Barasat - Hasnabad EMU	6 Days a week	Daily	
3.	31223 Sealdah - Barrackpore EMU	Daily	6 Days a week	Decrease in Frequency i.e except Sunday
4.	30116 Barrackpore - B.B.D. Bag EMU	Daily	6 Days a week	
5.	30113 B.B.D. Bag - Barrrackpore EMU	Daily	6 Days a week	
6.	31242 Barrackpore - Sealdah EMU	Daily	6 Days a week	

3) Major Timings Changes:

A. Mail/Express :

Sl no.	Train No.	Train Name	Existing Timings	Revised Timings
1.	13433	Sir M. Visvesvaraya Terminal, Bengaluru - Malda Town - Amrit Bharat Express	Malda Town Arr: 11.00	Malda Town Arr: 09.15
2.	18620	Godda – Ranchi Express	Godda Dep: 17.00	Godda Dep: 16.05
3.	13125	Kolkata – Sairang Express	Kolkata Dep: 12.25 Malda Town: 18.35/18.45	Kolkata Dep: 10.45 Malda Town: 16.50/17.00
4.	13403	Ranchi- Bhagalpur Vananchal Express	Bhagalpur Arr: 08.15	Bhagalpur Arr: 09.00
5.	15709	Malda Town – New Jalpaiguri Express	Malda Town Dep: 16.50	Malda Town Dep: 14.30
6.	19603	Daurai - Godda Express	Godda Arr: 22.20	Godda Arr: 22.00
7.	13177	Sealdah – Jangipur Road Express	Jangipur Road Arr: 12.05	Jangipur Road Arr: 11.55
8.	13015	Howrah – Jamalpur Kaviguru Express	Howrah Dep: 11.05 Jamalpur Arr: 21.35	Howrah Dep: 10.55 Jamalpur Arr: 21.15
9.	15960	Dibrugarh – Howrah Kamrup Express	Malda Town: 21.50/22.00	Malda Town:22.00/22.10
10.	15962	Dibrugarh – Howrah Kamrup Express	Malda Town: 21.50/22.00	Malda Town: 22.00/22.10
11.	18603	Ranchi – Godda Express	Kiul: 23.55/00.25	Kiul: 00.05/00.35
12.	18185	Tatanagar – Godda Express	Kiul: 23.55/00.25	Kiul: 00.05/00.35
13.	13190	Balurghat – Sealdah Express	Malda Town: 21.30/21.40	Malda Town: 21.40/21.50
14.	13030	Mokama – Howrah Express	Howrah Arr: 03.35	Howrah Arr: 03.25
15.	13034	Katihar – Howrah Express	Howrah Arr: 02.50	Howrah Arr: 02.40
16.	13180	Siuri – Sealdah MEMU Express	Sealdah Arr: 10.05	Sealdah Arr: 09.57
17.	20501	Agartala – Anand Vihar Terminal Rajdhani Express	Malda Town:15.00/15.10	Malda Town:15.10/15.20
18.	20507	Sairang – Anand Vihar Terminal Rajdhani Express	Malda Town:15.00/15.10	Malda Town:15.10/15.20
19.	13334	Patna Jn. - Dumka Express	Dumka Arr.:13.30	Dumka Arr.:13.25
20.	15620	Kamakhya – Gaya Express	Malda Town: 20.05/20.15	Malda Town: 20.10/20.20
21.	13160	Jogbani – Kolkata Express	Malda Town: 20.05/20.15	Malda Town: 20.10/20.20
22.	22504	Dibrugarh – Kanniyakumari Vivek Express	Malda Town: 20.25/20.35	Malda Town: 20.30/20.40
23.	12336	Lokmanya Tilak Terminus – Bhagalpur Express	Bhagalpur Arr.: 18.00	Bhagalpur Arr.: 17.55
24.	22947	Surat – Bhagalpur Express	Bhagalpur Arr.: 18.35	Bhagalpur Arr.: 18.30
25.	15090	Gomtinagar – Godda Express	Godda Arr.: 11.20	Godda Arr.:11.15
26.	13415	Malda Town – Patna Jn. Express	Malda Town Dep:20.15	Malda Town Dep:20.20
27.	13185	Sealdah – Jaynagar Gangasagar Express	Sealdah Dep: 17.45	Sealdah Dep:17.50
28.	15959	Howrah – Dibrugarh Kamrup Express	Howrah Dep:18.30	Howrah Dep:18.35
29.	15961	Howrah – Dibrugarh Kamrup Express	Howrah Dep:18.30	Howrah Dep:18.35
30.	13005	Howrah – Aamritsar Mail	Howrah Dep: 19.15	Howrah Dep: 19.20
31.	12375	Tambaram – Jasidih Superfast Express	Asansol: 20.10/20.30	Asansol: 20.15/20.35
32.	13242	Rajendranagar Terminal – Banka Express	Banka Arr.:06.40	Banka Arr.:06.35
33.	13064	Balurghat – Howrah Express	Howrah Arr: 05.30	Howrah Arr: 05.25
34.	12260	New Delhi – Sealdah Duronto Express	Sealdah Arr: 13.25	Sealdah Arr: 13.30
35.	22202	Puri – Sealdah Duronto Express	Sealdah Arr: 04.05	Sealdah Arr: 04.15
36.	12350	New Delhi – Godda Humsafar Express	Godda: 22.30	Godda: 22.55
37.	13106	Ballia – Sealdah Express	Sealdah Arr: 02.05	Sealdah Arr: 02.15
38.	13161	Kolkata – Balurghat Express	Malda Town: 18.50/19.00	Malda Town: 18.55/19.05
39.	13466	Malda Town – Howrah Intercity Express	Malda Town Dep: 06.10	Malda Town Dep: 06.05
40.	14050	Delhi – Godda Express	Godda: 15.15	Godda: 15.45
41.	13018	Azimganj – Howrah Ganadevta Express	Azimganj Dep:15.50 Howrah Arr: 21.40	Azimganj Dep:16.00 Howrah Arr: 21.50
42.	13504	Hatia – Barddhaman MEMU Express	Asansol Dep: 18.30 Barddhaman Arr: 20.35	Asansol Dep: 18.50 Barddhaman Arr: 21.00
43.	15733	Balurghat – Bathinda Farakka Express	Malda Town:19.25/19.35	Malda Town:19.20/19.30
44.	15743	Balurghat – Bathinda Farakka Express	Malda Town:19.25/19.35	Malda Town:19.20/19.30

B. Passenger :

Sl. No.	Train No.	Train Name	Existing Timings		Revised Timings	
			Originating	Terminating	Originating	Terminating
1	33832	Bangaon – Sealdah EMU	11.30	13.58	11.35	13.30
2	33531	Sealdah – Hasnabad EMU	19.30	21.48	19.24	21.23
3	31922	Gede – Sealdah EMU	14.02	16.58	14.10	16.50
4	64322	Sahibganj – Azimganj MEMU Passenger	14.25	18.40	14.40	18.40
5	33439	Sealdah – Barasat EMU	10.58	11.43	13.20	14.05
6	33521	Sealdah – Hasnabad EMU	11.07	13.10	10.58	13.10
7	33368	Bangaon – Dum Dum Cantonment EMU	07.41	09.16	07.15	08.54
8	33369	Barasat – Bangaon EMU	06.20	07.30	05.55	07.05
9	33422	Madhyamgram – Sealdah EMU	08.52	09.35	08.37	09.20
10	73492	Godda – Dumka DEMU Passenger	16.10	18.05	16.40	18.50
11	73483	Dumka – Jasidih DEMU Passenger	18.30	19.55	19.15	20.40
12	63423	Jamalpur – Kiul MEMU Passenger	11.55	13.20	12.25	13.50
13	63063	Barddhaman – Tinpahar (Sahibganj) MEMU Passenger	06.20	11.30	06.05	12.35
14	73445	Hansdiha – Bhagalpur DEMU Passenger	22.25	00.50	22.50	01.05
15	73446	Bhagalpur – Hansdiha DEMU Passenger	19.58	22.10	20.30	22.40
16	73491	Dumka – Godda DEMU Passenger	13.35	15.45	14.25	16.02
17	73494	Godda - Dumka DEMU Passenger	21.05	22.55	20.45	22.40
18	53403	Rampurhat – Gaya Passenger	09.05	18.00/18.05	07.45	18.00/18.05
19	73444	Bhagalpur – Hansdiha DEMU Passenger	13.17	16.20	13.30	16.20
20	35042	Ahmadpur – Katwa EMU	17.30	18.55	17.20	18.55
21	73429	Bhagalpur – Jamalpur DEMU Passenger	12.58	15.40	13.05	15.40
22	34733	Lakshmikantapur - Sealdah EMU	11.30	13.17	11.35	13.15
23	34133	Komagata Maru Budge Budge – Sealdah EMU	12.28	13.32	12.35	13.32
24	33851	Sealdah – Bangaon EMU	19.24	21.24	19.30	21.24
25	63422	Sahibganj – Azimganj MEMU Passenger	14.25	18.40	14.40	18.50
26	34533	Canning – Sealdah EMU	13.10	14.40	13.15	14.40
27	34839	Diamond Harbour – Sealdah EMU	14.00	16.00	14.05	16.00
28	63431	Sahibganj – Jamalpur MEMU Passenger	07.10	11.45	07.20	11.50
29	53416	Jamalpur – Sahibganj Passenger	07.00	11.05	07.05	11.05
30	35041	Katwa – Ahmadpur EMU	15.50	17.15	15.50	17.10
31	53496	Rajmahal – Tinpahar Passenger	22.20	22.45	22.15	22.40
32	63075	Rampurhat – Barharwa MEMU Passenger	23.10	01.00	23.40	01.25
33	53444	Deoghar – Godda Passenger	10.45	12.40	10.40	12.30
34	37922	Katwa – Howrah EMU	10.36	14.10	10.50	14.20
35	31526	Shantipur – Sealdah EMU	13.12	15.32	13.15	15.32
36	33811	Sealdah – Bangaon EMU	05.02	03.15	04.57	03.10
37	53092	Azimganj-Krishnanagar City Jn. Passenger	16.10	18.30	16.00	18.20
38	34357	Canning - Sonarpur EMU	16.45	17.27	16.55	17.37
39	63057	Cossimbazar-Azimganj MEMU	22.03	22.22	22.10	22.29
40	34714	Sealdah – Lakshmikantapur EMU	04.30	06.00	04.50	06.20
41	34935	Namkhana – Lakshmikantapur EMU	03.15	04.06	03.10	04.01
42	34745	Lakshmikantapur – Sealdah EMU	18.10	19.44	18.05	19.40
43	34638	Sealdah – Baruipur EMU	16.18	17.02	16.15	16.59
44	30416	Sealdah – BBD Bag EMU	17.08	17.58	17.20	18.10
45	30331	Majerhat – Habra EMU	17.48	19.42	17.35	19.38
46	34413	Sonarpur – Sealdah EMU	07.20	07.54	07.26	08.00
47	34427	Sonarpur – Sealdah EMU	17.43	18.18	17.39	18.14
48	34432	Sealdah – Sonarpur EMU	17.20	17.48	17.14	17.42
49	33532	Hasnabad – Sealdah EMU	16.56	18.59	17.08	19.13
50	37742	Katwa – Bandel EMU	04.22	06.35	04.16	06.30
51	37744	Katwa – Bandel EMU	08.50	11.00	08.55	11.05
52	33366	Bangaon – Barasat EMU	22.10	23.20	22.22	23.31
53	33534	Hasnabad – Sealdah EMU	17.53	19.57	17.26	19.35
54	73443	Hansdiha – Bhagalpur DEMU Passenger	16.30	18.55	16.35	19.00
55	73402	Bhagalpur – Godda DEMU Passenger	11.05	14.08	11.00	14.03
56	34854	Sealdah – Diamond Harbour EMU	21.10	22.49	21.00	22.39
57	34748	Sealdah – Lakshmikantapur EMU	21.00	22.38	21.10	22.48
58	34517	Canning – Sealdah EMU	06.00	07.17	05.49	07.08
59	34817	Diamond Harbour – Sealdah EMU	05.30	07.08	05.41	07.17
60	31927	Sealdah – Gede EMU	20.32	23.20	20.45	23.33
61	31537	Sealdah – Shantipur EMU	20.45	23.03	20.32	22.50
62	31516	Shantipur – Sealdah EMU	05.42	08.00	05.55	08.13
63	31914	Gede – Sealdah EMU	05.02	07.50	05.10	07.50
64	31614	Ranaghat – Sealdah EMU	06.05	07.50	05.55	07.37
65	34791	Sealdah – Namkhana EMU	04.12	06.50	04.07	06.50
66	34914	Lakshmikantapur – Namkhana EMU	04.12	05.10	04.07	05.03
67	34937	Namkhana – Kakdwip EMU	04.39	04.50	04.35	04.46
68	34981	Kakdwip – Lakshmikantapur EMU	05.00	05.42	04.50	05.32
69	34882	Sonarpur – Diamond Harbour EMU	04.50	05.55	04.40	05.45
70	33436	Barasat – Sealdah EMU	10.40	11.27	10.45	11.32
71	63103	Sealdah – Lalgola MEMU Passenger	19.20	23.55	19.15	23.55
72	31533	Sealdah – Shantipur EMU	18.50	21.10	18.55	21.15
73	33802	Bangaon – Sealdah EMU	07.15	09.15	07.05	09.10
74	33401	Sealdah – Barasat EMU	18.14	18.58	18.30	19.14
75	33891	Dum Dum Cantonment – Bangaon EMU	18.26	20.08	18.37	20.19
76	33370	Bangaon – Barasat EMU	20.20	21.26	20.30	21.45
77	33854	Bangaon – Sealdah EMU	20.40	22.40	20.52	22.49
78	33714	Bangaon – Ranaghat EMU	06.12	06.55	06.05	06.43
79	33713	Ranaghat – Bangaon EMU	06.15	07.01	06.00	06.51
80	33716	Bangaon – Ranaghat EMU	07.20	08.05	07.07	08.05
81	34538	Sealdah – Canning EMU	17.14	18.30	17.08	18.24
82	53011	Katwa – Azimganj Passenger	13.55	15.40	13.45	15.30
83	53055	Katwa – Ahmadpur Passenger	08.20	09.55	08.40	10.15
84	63531	Andal – Sainthia MEMU Passenger	08.25	10.05	08.20	10.10
85	63534	Sainthia - Andal MEMU Passenger	10.40	12.20	10.30	12.20
86	63536	Sainthia - Andal MEMU Passenger	16.25	18.05	16.20	18.10
87	63508	Asansol-Bardddhaman MEMU Passenger	05.45	07.50	05.40	07.50
88	63512	Asansol – Barddhaman MEMU Passenger	06.20	08.35	06.15	08.35
89	53443	Godda – Deoghar Passenger	13.15	15.05	13.00	15.00
90	63545	Andal – Jasidih MEMU Passenger	06.30	10.20	06.20	10.15
91	63547	Jasidih - Banka MEMU Passenger	10.30	12.05	10.25	12.05
92	63505	Barddhaman – Asansol MEMU Passenger	03.55	06.00	03.40	05.40
93	63510	Jhajha – Barddhaman MEMU Passenger	16.55	19.05	16.50	19.05
94	63516	Asansol – Barddhaman MEMU Passenger	10.20	12.30	10.15	12.35
95	63565	Jasidih – Jhajha MEMU Passenger	10.05	11.10	10.00	11.05
96	63573	Jasidih – Kiul MEMU Passenger	11.05	12.15	10.55	12.15
97	63566	Jhajha – Jasidih MEMU Passenger	11.30	12.30	11.25	12.25
98	53404	Gaya – Jamalpur Passenger	11.05/10	12.30	10.50/55	12.25
99	73411	Godda – Hansdiha DEMU Passenger	17.20	18.00	17.15	18.00
100	73430	Jamalpur - Bhagalpur DEMU Passenger	10.50	12.25	11.30	13.05
101	73441	Hansdiha – Bhagalpur DEMU Passenger	10.28	12.43	10.20	12.43
102	73448	Bhagalpur – Banka DEMU Passenger	17.05	18.50	17.02	18.55
103	73449	Banka - Bhagalpur DEMU Passenger	10.20	12.10	10.15	12.10
104	63142	Godda – Sealdah MEMU Passenger	09.50	18.35	09.45	18.35
105	63151	Jasidih-Baidyanath Dham MEMU Passenger	05.20	05.40	05.25	05.45
106	63155	Jasidih-Baidyanath Dham MEMU Passenger	10.00	10.20	09.55	10.15
107	63157	Jasidih-Baidyanath Dham MEMU Passenger	12.35	12.55	12.30	12.50
108	63154	Baidyanath Dham-Jasidih MEMU Passenger	09.30	09.50	09.20	09.40
109	63156	Baidyanath Dham-Jasidih MEMU Passenger	10.35	10.55	10.30	10.50
110	63158	Baidyanath Dham-Jasidih MEMU Passenger	13.30	13.50	13.10	13.30
111	63162	Baidyanath Dham-Jasidih MEMU Passenger	16.55	17.15	17.00	17.20
112	63164	Baidyanath Dham-Jasidih MEMU Passenger	18.40	19.00	18.35	18.55
113	63168	Baidyanath Dham-Jasidih MEMU Passenger	23.30	23.50	23.25	23.45
114	31819	Sealdah – Krishnanagar City Jn. Galloping EMU	07.53	10.10	07.52	10.10
115	31415	Sealdah – Naihati EMU	07.52	08.55	07.57	08.57
116	31617	Sealdah – Ranaghat EMU	08.00	09.48	08.07	09.54
117	31531	Sealdah – Shantipur EMU	17.52	20.00	17.50	20.00
118	31417	Sealdah – Naihati EMU	09.34	10.34	09.39	10.39
119	31229	Sealdah – Barrackpore EMU	09.40	10.18	09.44	10.22
120	31411	Sealdah – Naihati Galloping EMU	04.40	05.40	04.35	05.30
121	31511	Sealdah – Shantipur EMU	04.35	06.55	04.40	06.55
122	33517	Sealdah – Hasnabad EMU	08.22	10.25	08.20	10.25
123	31228	Barrackpore – Sealdah EMU	10.30	11.12	10.36	11.20
124	33533	Sealdah – Hasnabad EMU	22.15	00.24	22.20	00.24
125	32413	Sealdah – Baruipara EMU	20.42	21.50	20.40	22.00
126	31111	Sealdah – Katwa EMU	08.06	11.40	08.05	11.40
127	33863	Sealdah – Bangaon EMU	23.50	01.45	23.58	01.53
128	63111	Sealdah – Ranaghat EMU	23.50	01.38	23.58	01.46
129	32233	Sealdah – Dankuni EMU	12.14	12.57	12.13	12.58
130	34155	Komagata Maru Budge Budge – Sealdah EMU	20.15	21.08	20.20	21.17
131	33833	Sealdah – Bangaon EMU	13.53	15.48	14.05	16.00
132	33895	Sealdah – Thakurnagar EMU	15.34	17.02	15.52	17.20
133	33316	Hasnabad – Barasat EMU	19.41	20.58	19.30	20.45

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Visitors take a bullock cart ride during Raitha Santhe on the GKVK campus of the University of Agriculture Sciences (UAS) in Bengaluru on Saturday. (Right) Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, Agriculture Minister Chaluvarayaswamy, UAS Vice-Chancellor Dr S V Suresh and others take a look at exhibits at the fair. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

GKVK turns farm-to-fork hub for 'Raitha Santhe'

Event serves as bridge between rural producers and urban consumers

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

The lush green campus of the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) at GKVK was transformed into a bustling marketplace on Saturday as thousands of Bengalureans flocked to the 'Raitha Santhe' (Farmers' Market) and Farmers' Day celebrations.

The event, held to commemorate birth anniversary of former PM Charan Singh, became a bridge for rural producers and urban consumers.

Braving early morning chill, health enthusiasts and morning walkers were among the first to arrive at 7 am, engaging in direct trade with farmers. The fair highlighted the growing city-wide preference for organic produce, cutting out middlemen to ensure better margins for growers and fresher goods for citizens.

The market featured an array of veggies and fruits. Stalls showcased everything from fresh forest honey and millets to organic ghee, cold-pressed oils, poultry, livestock and vermicompost. High-demand items included medicinal plants and bio-pesticides, alongside innovative tools like the field-bean (Avarekai) shelling machine developed by the university.

The fair also had live demonstrations on terrace gardening and urban horticulture.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who inaugurated the event, was seen interacting closely with farmers. "I am a farmer's son first," he remarked.

While visiting the stalls, was surprised at the price disparity in retail, noting that mushrooms sold for Rs 50 at the fair often cost five times more in the city. He purchased milky mushrooms and organic jaggery, praising quality of the produce.

The event also marked a significant expansion of the university's facilities. Three new buildings were inaugurated, including a boys' hostel and two sophisticated Honey Quality Testing Laboratories.

Agriculture Minister N Cheluvarayaswamy emphasised Bengaluru's role as an export hub. He noted that nearly 50 flights daily carry fruits, flowers and vegetables from Bengaluru to international markets.

"Our farmers in Chikkaballapur, Devanahalli and Magadi are the backbone of the city's food security," he said.

University of Agriculture Sciences Vice-Chancellor S V Suresh announced that the university, recently accredited with an 'A+' grade by NAAC, will launch new programmes in the 2026-27 academic year.

These include BSc (Honors) in Organic Farming, BTech in Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture and specialised MSc courses in Silviculture and Floriculture.

The event also honoured progressive farmers from nine districts, celebrating their contributions to the state's agricultural productivity.

Slum demolition: Cong high command expresses concern

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Congress high command on Saturday expressed serious concern over the demolition of unauthorised constructions in Kogilu village, Bengaluru, and asked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to implement relief and rehabilitation measures for the affected families.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal said he had spoken to Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar — who also handles Bengaluru development portfolio — about the issue and urged them to provide relief to those affected.

"Conveyed the AICC's serious concern that such actions should have been undertaken with far greater caution, sensitivity and compassion, keeping the human impact at the centre," Venugopal posted on X. Both the CM and DCM have assured that they will personally engage with the affected families, establish an appropriate mechanism for addressing grievances and ensure rehabilitation and relief for those impacted, Venugopal added.

The CM, who was in Delhi to attend the Congress Working Committee meeting, told mediapersons that Greater Bengaluru Authority had demolished illegal settlements after following due process.

He said that the site where the illegal houses had been built was designated as a waste-disposal site and was not suitable for human habitation.

Driver of Goa-bound Seabird bus held for drunk driving in B'luru

BENGALURU, DHNS: The memory of the horrific bus inferno in Chitradurga had barely begun to fade when another shocker emerged from Bengaluru's streets.

A driver of a Seabird Tourist bus, headed from Bengaluru to Goa, was caught driving the vehicle under the influence of alcohol during a special crackdown by the Upparpet traffic police on Friday night.

The incident has sparked fresh outrage and raised serious questions about passenger safety in private long-distance buses, especially since it involves the same operator whose bus was involved in a fatal accident just 2 days ago.

As part of heightened security for New Year celebrations, the Bengaluru traffic police have set up over 140 checkpoints across the city.

During a routine inspection near Majestic area, the Seabird bus was flagged down for suspicion. Upon conducting a breathalyser test, the driver was found to be significantly over legal limit.

"We took him into custody and seized his documents," a senior officer from the Upparpet traffic station said.

Ensuring that the passengers were not stranded, police coordinated with the bus agency to arrange for an alternative driver. The incident comes at a time when the state is yet to come to terms with the tragedy on national highway 48.

Early on Dec 25, a Seabird sleeper bus travelling from Bengaluru to Gokarna was struck by a container truck that jumped the divider in Hiriyur.

While the Chitradurga accident was primarily attributed to truck driver's negligence, the incident of drunk driving by same company's staff has highlighted lack of oversight.

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AFRICAN KORA STRINGS & MYSTIC SONGS - Dawda Jobarteh (Gambia)
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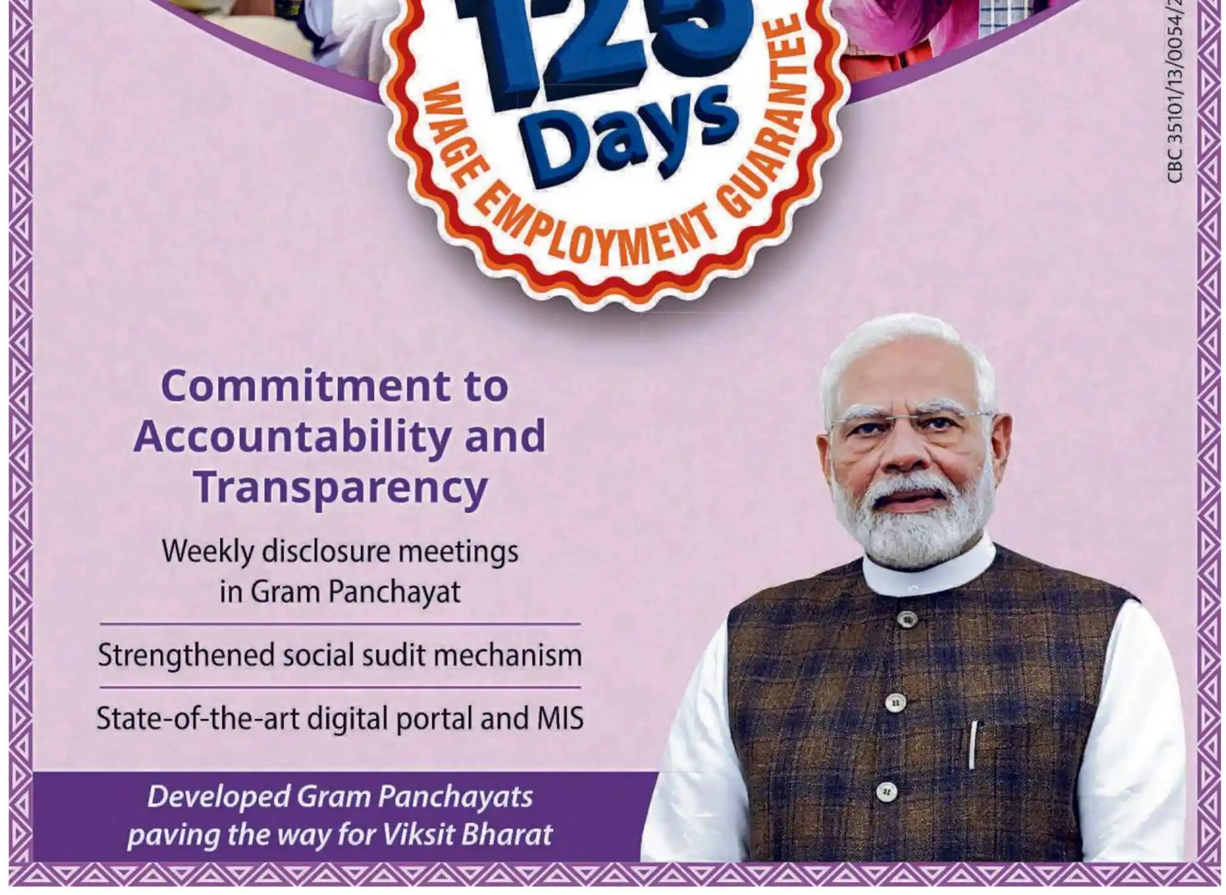
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(विकसित भारत – जी राम जी) Act, 2025
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Commitment to Accountability and Transparency
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Developed Gram Panchayats paving the way for Viksit Bharat
CBC 35101/13/0054/2526

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Sl. No.	Train No.	Train Name	Existing Timings		Revised Timings	
			Originating	Terminating	Originating	Terminating
134	33319	Barasat – Hasnabad EMU	18.10	19.32	17.59	19.20
135	63521	Barddhaman – Asansol MEMU Passenger	15.57	17.55	15.30	17.45
136	63519	Barddhaman – Bokaro Steel City MEMU Passenger	15.30	17.45/18.00	15.57	18.15/18.25
137	63543	Asansol – NSC Bose Jn. Gomoh MEMU Passenger	18.10	19.12/19.13	18.00	19.12/19.13
138	32414	Baruipara – Sealdah EMU	22.48	23.50	22.35	23.40
139	33320	Hasnabad – Barasat EMU	22.24	23.40	22.14	23.30
140	36817	Howrah – Chandanpur EMU	07.08	09.12	07.15	09.30
141	36841	Howrah – Barddhaman EMU Via Chord	18.35	20.45	18.30	20.45
142	36845	Howrah – Barddhaman EMU Via Chord	19.45	21.54	19.40	21.50
143	36849	Howrah – Barddhaman EMU Via Chord	21.00	23.05	21.10	23.25
144	36827	Howrah – Barddhaman EMU Via Chord	12.05	14.13	12.00	14.10
145	36829	Howrah – Barddhaman EMU Via Chord	13.27	15.40	13.20	15.40
146	36088	Masagram – Howrah EMU	22.06	23.40	21.42	23.30
147	37232	Bandel – Howrah EMU	08.52	09.55	08.48	09.55
148	37612	Panduah – Howrah EMU	08.55	10.15	09.00	10.22
149	37214	Bandel – Howrah EMU	03.50	04.50	03.30	04.35
150	37213	Howrah – Bandel EMU	05.14	06.15	05.05	06.08
151	37359	Howrah – Arambagh - Goghat EMU	05.19	07.40	05.10	08.00
152	37815	Howrah-Barddhaman EMU Via Main	05.25	07.37	05.15	07.37
153	37911	Howrah – Katwa EMU	05.30	08.35	05.22	08.30
154	37353	Howrah – Tarakeswar EMU	05.35	07.13	05.30	07.10
155	37311	Howrah – Tarakeswar EMU	05.55	07.25	05.48	07.25
156	37340	Tarakeswar – Howrah EMU	16.21	17.46	16.32	18.07
157	37532	Bandel – Naihati EMU	09.12	09.32	09.08	09.30
158	37263	Howrah – Bandel EMU	17.47	18.46	17.47	18.56
159	37747	Bandel – Katwa EMU	08.10	10.20	08.15	10.29
160	32212	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	05.03	05.45	05.00	05.45
161	32218	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	07.02	07.46	07.00	07.46
162	32220	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	07.45	08.32	07.42	08.32
163	32222	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	08.43	09.28	08.40	09.28
164	32226	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	09.50	10.35	09.47	10.35
165	32230	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	11.21	12.06	11.18	12.06
166	32232	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	11.54	12.42	11.51	12.42
167	32234	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	13.10	14.05	13.07	14.00
168	32236	Dankuni – Sealdah EMU	14.20	15.05	14.17	15.05
169	03037 (63043)	Katwa – Ahmadpur MEMU Passenger	06.35	08.00	07.05	08.25
170	37546	Bandel – Naihati EMU	16.50	17.10	16.45	17.05
171	73420	Bhagalpur – Sahibganj DEMU Passenger	11.10	13.10	10.55	12.55

Sl. No.	Train No.	Train Name	Existing Timings		Revised Timings	
			Originating	Terminating	Originating	Terminating
172	31519	Sealdah – Shantipur EMU	10.32	12.50	13.40	12.56
173	37916	Katwa – Howrah EMU	06.20	09.25	06.15	09.25
174	63023	Azimganj – Rampurhat MEMU	06.00	07.40	06.15	08.10
175	63008	Rampurhat – Katwa MEMU Passenger	08.55	12.34	08.30	12.25
176	35014	Katwa – Barddhaman EMU	07.25	08.45	07.20	08.45
177	37308	Haripal – Howrah EMU	08.28	09.42	08.25	09.40
178	53015	Katwa – Azimganj Passenger	17.10	18.55	17.25	19.10
179	63013	Katwa – Azimganj MEMU Passenger	15.50	17.35	16.05	17.50
180	37385	Tarakeswar – Arambagh – Goghat EMU	03.57	04.35	03.40	04.32
181	63069	Barddhaman – Rampurhat MEMU Passenger	20.45	23.00	20.52	23.25
182	37818	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	05.42	08.08	05.40	08.12
183	37820	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	06.18	08.36	06.10	08.31
184	37782	Barddhaman – Bandel EMU	06.45	08.00	06.55	08.12
185	37824	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	07.00	09.15	07.15	09.40
186	37828	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	08.22	10.38	08.20	10.40
187	37830	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	08.46	11.05	08.50	11.10
188	37832	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	09.57	12.40	09.55	12.40
189	31152	Barddhaman – Sealdah EMU	14.45	17.40	14.40	17.40
190	37840	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	15.05	17.25	15.10	17.37
191	37784	Barddhaman – Bandel EMU	21.00	22.20	21.10	22.30
192	36814	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	03.58	06.10	03.55	06.10
193	36816	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	05.04	07.10	04.55	07.10
194	36818	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	05.40	07.45	05.30	07.45
195	36820	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	06.05	08.15	06.00	08.10
196	36822	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	06.48	08.57	06.40	08.55
197	36824	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	07.22	09.25	07.05	09.10
198	36826	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	07.32	09.35	07.30	09.35
199	37822	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	06.40	08.35	06.35	08.30
200	37852	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Main	19.55	22.15	19.50	22.10
201	36854	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	20.07	22.10	20.00	22.05
202	36856	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	20.20	22.25	20.30	22.35
203	36858	Barddhaman – Howrah EMU Via Chord	20.43	22.45	21.00	23.10
204	37914	Katwa – Howrah EMU	05.40	08.48	05.35	08.45
205	37918	Katwa – Howrah EMU	07.00	10.20	06.55	10.10

Timings of Mail/Express, Passenger trains and Suburban trains have been revised and is being updated in NTES which will be effected from **01.01.2026**. Minor timings change of other trains (Mail/Express, Passenger trains and Suburban trains) will be reflected in NTES which will be effected from **01.01.2026**.

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HC says child marriages in Raichur 'disturbing', directs DLSA to raise awareness

AMBARISH B
BENGALURU, DHNS

The High Court of Karnataka has directed the District Legal Services Authority, Raichur, to organise awareness programmes and workshops on prevention of child marriages in the district.

"It is both disturbing and disheartening to note the recurring trend in Raichur district, arising out of its socio-economic backwardness and illiteracy, where minor girls are often compelled into marriage by their families. Despite legislative attempts to deter such practices, cases of child marriage continue to surface," Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum said, while granting conditional bail to a 24-year-old man from Raichur accused of marrying a 16-year-old girl.

The court observed that the case at hand appears to be a manifestation of socio-cultural ignorance and poverty, resulting in violations of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act and consequentially attracting provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act. The prosecution's case was that the man had forcibly married the victim, a minor, during an inspection conducted by the Panchayat Development Officer along with the Child Welfare Officer.

Pursuant to the registration of the crime, the petitioner was charged with offences under Section 64 read with Section 3(5) of BNS, sections 6 and 17 of the Pocso Act, and sections 9 and 10 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act.

However, the man's counsel submitted that the girl's age is disputed and requires deeper judicial scrutiny.

Her Aadhaar, issued in 2014, records the date of birth as March 26, 2007, contrary to the date of birth shown in school records as July 26, 2009. He further submitted that the victim's mother, a co-accused, has been enlarged on bail and that whether it was a valid marriage and whether the rigours of the Pocso Act are attracted are to be established during trial.

The court said that it is required to be examined during trial as to whether the school records are authentic and whether the prosecution can substantiate the age of the victim as a minor. The court also noted that the victim's mother was willing to undertake that the daughter would stay with her until attaining majority and that there shall be no cohabitation between the petitioner and the victim.

"In the present case, both the petitioner and the victim belong to a vulnerable, backward class, and the petitioner has been in custody since August 04, 2025. With the investigation having concluded and the charge sheet already filed, continued incarceration at a stage where the victim's age is seriously disputed may prejudice the petitioner's rights under Article 21 of the Constitution. A pragmatic and sensitive approach is warranted in cases stemming from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, this court finds that enlarging the petitioner on bail with stringent conditions would not adversely affect the prosecution," the court said.

2 devpt projects in state invite penalty for violations

MoRTH seeks ex post facto approval for works executed

BENGALURU, DHNS

Two development projects in Karnataka have been penalised by the central environment authorities for allegedly undertaking works within forest areas without the necessary clearances, sending a clear message against unauthorised works.

The first project proposed by the regional office of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) sought the diversion of 10.24 acres of forest in the Bagalkot district. The work, related to widening of a section of the NH 367, was awarded to Sai Samarth Engineering Pvt Ltd, a Pune-based company.

While the proposal was being made, the company undertook work on approximately two acres of forest without obtaining the necessary clearances. The Forest Department registered a case and stopped the work.

Due to the violation, the MoRTH regional office had to seek regularisation by requesting an ex post facto approval for the project.

The Forest Advisory Committee, which looked into the proposal, took note of the submission that the contractor had "unknowingly and unintentionally" taken up the work in the forest adjacent to the non-forest land where work was in progress.

While recommending the project, the committee asked the user agency to pay five times the net present value and added that a decision on penal compensatory afforestation (CA) will also be taken.

In the second case, the Banavadi Gram Panchayat in Magadi Taluk had also filed an application for ex post facto to clearance for works taken up in one acre of land for the construction of an approach road, pump house, pipeline and cables to Kanchugal Muneshwara Swami Temple.

The panbel deliberated on the proposal and noted that the temple was recognised as an enclosure in the 1907 notification.

However, the works taken up in the surrounding forest area lacked clearance. The committee recommended the project by imposing similar penal conditions.

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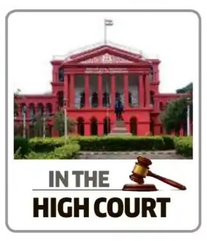
HC upholds DNA test order on husband disputing paternity

BENGALURU, DHNS: The High Court of Karnataka has refused to interfere with an order passed by the Vijayapura district and sessions court, directing the DNA test of a school teacher.

The teacher had questioned the marital status of the woman and paternity of the child before the district court.

The dispute originated with the woman, claiming to be the teacher's wife, filing a plea before the trial court in Vijayapura seeking maintenance for the food, clothes and shelter for herself and the child. In 2020, the trial court granted maintenance of Rs 5,000 each to the wife and the daughter under CrPC Section 125.



Challenging this order, the petitioner filed a revision petition before the district court contending that the woman is not at all his wife and the child not his daughter. He claimed to have found certain documents—a marriage card with another woman's photographs of the marriage — to establish this fact.

On July 10, 2025, the woman filed an interim application seeking a DNA test of the husband. The court allowed this application and directed the district health officer, Vijayapura, to draw his blood sample and send it to Forensic Sciences Laboratory (FSL), Bengaluru.

Challenging this order before the high court, the teacher contended that such a direction could not have been issued in the exercise of revisional jurisdiction.

Justice Magadum noted that though the petitioner was directed to pay maintenance in 2020, the petitioner has not paid a single rupee despite the lapse of nearly five years.

Insofar as the direction for the DNA test was concerned, the court said that the order operates in favour of him and essential to resolve contested facts.

"It is now well-settled that in proceedings under Section 125 of CrPC, where the husband himself disputes either the marital relationship or the paternity of the child, the court is empowered to direct a DNA test to ascertain the truth of such assertions. The Supreme Court (in Nandlal Wasudeo Badwaik vs Lata Nandlal Badwaik case) has categorically held that when scientific evidence such as DNA profiling is available, the court cannot be compelled to shut its eyes to the truth, particularly when paternity is seriously contested," Justice Magadum said.

The court further said, "This court is constrained to observe that the present petition is nothing but an attempt to further delay and frustrate the maintenance proceedings, which are summary in nature and intended to provide immediate relief to a destitute wife and child. The conduct of the petitioner and that of the father of respondent No.2 prima facie reflects a grossly unfair approach, compelling the wife and daughter to run from pillar to post for years together merely to secure subsistence."

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CHANGE OF NAME
I, KRISHNASWAMY SUDHARSHAN residing at # 83, 17th Cross, 8th Main, Bandappa Garden, Muthyalanagar, Bengaluru North, Bengaluru- 560054, have changed my name to KRISHNASWAMY SUDARSHAN, vide affidavit 16-12-2025 before notary V. Nagarajan, Bengaluru
CHANGE OF NAME
I, NAGARAJ RAGHAVENDRA ACHARYA residing at # 4450/3, Chawat Galli, Belagavi, Tq & Dist: Belagavi, have changed my name to NAGARAJ ACHARYA vide affidavit dated 27/12/2025, before notary K.V. Jagannath Reddy, Bengaluru. Henceforth I shall be called NAGARAJ ACHARYA only.

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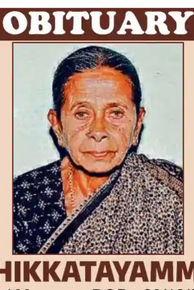

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"You will live in our heart forever"
Deeply mourned by:
Dr. M Chandre Gowda, Laxmi & Family members

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Mrs.RITA MEAGHER
DOB: 08-08-1934 - DOD: 27-12-2025
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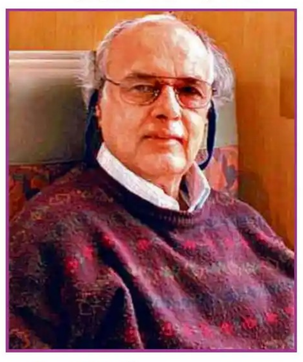

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In loving & reverential memory
We pray may his soul rest in peace
Family & friends

Forest dept secures 94 Olive Ridley turtles eggs in Kumta

KUMTA (U-K DIST), DHNS: Forest department personnel, along with locals, on Saturday collected 94 Olive Ridley turtle eggs from a nest near Bada in the taluk and relocated them to a hatchery at Ramanagindi near Dhareshwar.

Kumta RFO Praveen Nayak told *DH*, "This is the time when Olive Ridley turtles arrive ashore to lay eggs. They arrived at the shore near a Mutt in Bada at 11 pm on Friday. They laid 94 eggs in a conical nest, closed the hole and returned back to sea, all in a single night. The department had alerted locals about arrivals of turtles for nesting.

After they passed on the message about the nesting, our personnel reached the spot, collected eggs from the nest and relocated them to a hatchery at Ramanagindi. The Olive Ridley turtle eggs normally hatch in 45-65 days. The hatchlings will then be released into the sea," the RFO sai. He said that this was the first nest of turtles this season. He said locals who informed the department about the nesting would get an incentive.

A nest with 94 eggs of Olive Ridley turtles at the shore near Bada in Kumta taluk, Uttara Kannada district.

PROGRAMMED TO PARALYSE?

'Supply beyond job market demand breeds unemployment'

CS engg seats: Consumerism trumps common sense

RASHMI BELUR
BENGALURU, DHNS

For the next academic year, the government may impose restrictions while approving seats for engineering courses, especially computer science (CS) and related streams.

Considering the number of seats available in these streams and keeping the unemployment problems likely to erupt in the coming years, the department of higher education wants to regulate intake of students. For this, Karnataka is planning to follow the Telangana model.

Announcing this in the recently concluded session of the legislature, Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar expressed concerns over unscientific enhancement of seats, only for a few streams.

The minister assured the Council that the government would put a cap on intake for CS and related streams.

The minister, whose efforts to do it by approaching the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) failed, is now planning to emulate a Telangana government order, which was upheld by the High Court and Supreme Court.

"As soon as I took charge of this portfolio, I wrote to AICTE requesting to regulate seats in some engineering streams. But AICTE refused to do so, saying enhancement of seats was based on demand," Sudhakar said.

Considering the unemployment rate, the government has already implemented Yuva Nidhi, a monthly incentive scheme for graduates.

Data from the department of technical education reveals that of the 1.53 lakh total seats available for engineering courses, 99,707 seats were in CS and related streams. That's 64% of all engineering seats. A majority of the seats were in private universities and private unaided colleges in tier-1 cities.

Experts said enhancing seats abnormally only for CS and related streams would kill the spirit of engineering education itself.

"This year, we saw seats for CS and related streams at a few private universities and top colleges increased between 3,000 and 4,000. This is not a healthy development and definitely creates unemployment as all of them will graduate at a time," said the principal of a private engineering college. He said this enhancement would lead to more supply than demand and naturally increase unemployment.

According to data, one of the private universities in Bengaluru added 4,500 seats in CS and related streams this year.

"Surprisingly, all these seats were filled. Imagine, all 90,000 plus graduates in CS and related streams coming out after four years and hunting for jobs," said a former VTU vice-chancellor.

Academicians too have welcomed the government's decision to put a cap on seats in CS and related streams.

M N Guru Venkatesh, senior vice president of placements and skill development at Dayanand Sagar Group of Institutions, said the decision would help colleges in tier-3 and 4 cities.

"Though the cap will not have any impact on top 10 colleges, it is good to provide equal opportunities for students in both urban and rural colleges," he said.

Guru said when there is a cap, recruiters will naturally look to colleges in tier 3 and 4 cities, if they are not getting the required numbers from colleges in tier 1 and 2 cities."

When recruiters don't get enough number of students in top colleges, they will go to colleges down the order. Regulation is always good," he said.

> As soon as I took charge of this portfolio, I wrote to AICTE requesting to regulate seats in some engineering streams. But AICTE refused to do so, saying enhancement of seats was based on demand.
>
> **Dr M C Sudhakar,** Higher Education Minister

NOT PAR FOR THE COURSE

Computer science & related streams

Year	Intake
2020	39,445
2021	44,938
2022	56,619
2023	67,619
2024	86,693
2025	99,707

Skill gaps

Industry experts also appreciated this move by the government and expressed concerns over skill gaps.

Narayan Raghavan, managing director, Athiya Organisational Competencies, said, "The quality of engineers graduating is pathetic, skill gap is plenty. There is no correlation between industry and syllabus. More stringent measures are needed when it comes to skills among engineering students. Soft skills have to be integrated with syllabus. As every company caters to global market, they have to again upskill them after hiring. The CS engineers will get jobs only if they are super engineers because all entry level jobs are AI-driven. In next 3-4 years, employment will be a problem if we don't streamline".

Athiya Organisational Competencies provides skill training to engineering graduates.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arrives for the Congress Working Committee meeting, in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI PHOTO

Cabinet reshuffle: CM to visit Delhi next month to seek nod

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was unable to secure an exclusive meeting with the Congress party's top leaders to discuss state political developments during his two-day visit to the national capital, as they were preoccupied.

The chief minister, who was in Delhi to attend the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, had sought an appointment with senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday. However, Rahul Gandhi's office informed the chief minister that he was occupied with other commitments and would travel abroad.

As Rahul Gandhi is expected to be out of the country for two weeks, Siddaramaiah was advised to return after mid-January.

He is likely to visit the national capital in mid-January, most probably after the Sankranti festival, to meet Rahul Gandhi and seek approval for a cabinet reshuffle, sources close to him told *DH*.

Siddaramaiah is keen on reshuffling the cabinet ahead of the Budget session, expected in March, by dropping around 10 ministers and inducting new faces.

However, the chief minister declined to respond to any questions regarding the cabinet reshuffle or state political developments.

Separately, the chief minister, while speaking to the media, defended the Greater Bengaluru Authority's (GBA) decision to demolish illegal structures on government land in Kogilu village, Yelahanka, Bengaluru.

He stated that the GBA had taken action strictly in accordance with the law to protect public land and ensure public safety.

The illegal settlement had encroached on a quarry site used for solid waste disposal, making it extremely unsafe for human habitation, he said. Notices had been issued before the eviction drive. The illegal settlers had come from other states. On humanitarian grounds, the GBA authorities are making alternative arrangements for their accommodation, he said.

THE JOY OF GIVING

Rural women, mostly agricultural labourers, after a hard day's work at fields make jolada (jowar) rotti for the Gavisiddeshwara Jatra dasoha (which runs for two weeks), at Hatti village. They pool their whatever meagre resources and prepare rottis for the fair. This year, the mutt is expecting over 15 lakh rottis from the villages in Koppal and the neighbouring districts. DH PHOTO/ BHARATH KANDAKUR

Lahar Singh Siroya

BJP RS member seeks White Paper on investments in K'taka

BENGALURU, DHNS: Slamming Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for claiming credit over Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn's investment in Karnataka, Rajya Sabha BJP member Lahar Singh Siroya on Saturday demanded a White Paper on companies that ditched Karnataka under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

"Rahul Gandhi and Congress leaders, who were jumping around saying that Indian economy is 'dead', are now claiming credit for investment in Karnataka. Can a multinational company invest in India without the union government being involved?" Siroya said in a statement.

Siroya said Rahul and "his minions" had endorsed US president Donald Trump describing India as a 'dead economy'.

"Now, without batting an eyelid, they claim credit for Foxconn's investment and job-creation in Karnataka. If the NDA government under Modi had not worked meticulously in the last 12 years to create a positive investment climate, maintain fiscal discipline and a high rate of economic growth, would any multinational company have even considered any investment in India?" the BJP leader said.

"Also, the legacy of Karnataka as a technology hub does not belong to Congress alone. Successive governments from the 1980s have made it their consistent policy to promote technology and nurture engineering talent," Siroya said.

"Can Siddaramaiah's government claim any vision other than splitting up castes, promoting Ahinda agenda and creating chaos by promoting urban-Naxals?," he said.

Cry for Dalit CM at CWC meeting

NEW DELHI, DHNS: A dozen people on Saturday staged a demonstration in front of the Congress party's headquarters here demanding that a Dalit be appointed as the chief minister of Karnataka.

The protest led by Baba Saheb Ambedkar Dalitha Seva Samithi was held when the Congress Working Committee (CWC) was meeting at the Indira Bhavan. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was present at the meeting. The banner displayed by the protesters had an image of Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara, a Dalit, as well as that of VCK leader-MP Thol Thirumavalavan, also a Dalit.

They demanded that Parameshwara be given the state's top post.

The protest comes at a time when Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's camp has raised the demand for a leadership change in the state.

Separately, members of the Dalit Leaders' Collective, who claim to be part of the Congress, said there were several Dalit Congress leaders, but none of them could become chief minister. They demanded that deserving Dalit leaders, like Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Ministers K H Muniyappa, G Parameshwara, H C Mahadevappa and Satish Jarkiholi, be considered for the post of the chief minister.

Five in contention for posthumous Karnataka Ratna honour

BENGALURU, DHNS

The list of winners of the 'Karnataka Ratna' award, the state's highest civilian honour, could expand with the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government under pressure to consider posthumously recognizing five persons, including environmentalist Saalumarada Thimmakka and senior lawmaker Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

Instituted in 1992, the Karnataka Ratna has been conferred upon 11 people. Late actors Vishnuvardhan and B Saroja Devi were the last two to receive the top award posthumously in September.

The government is examining a proposal to posthumously give the Karnataka Ratna award to actor-politician Ambareesh and former chief minister S M Krishna.

Meanwhile, the government is facing demands that Thimmakka, who died in November aged 114, and Shamanur, the 94-year-old Davangere South MLA who passed away earlier this month, should be awarded the Karnataka Ratna. The government will also have to decide on calls that have been made to honour writer S L Bhyrappa, who died aged 94 in September, with the Karnataka Ratna award. Between 1992 and 2009, eight persons received the Karnataka Ratna award, none posthumously.

The previous Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government gave the state its ninth recipient of the Karnataka Ratna award in 2022, after a gap of 13 years, and the first posthumous winner: actor Puneeth Rajkumar, whose death pushed the state and his fans into a sea of sadness.

Vishnuvardhan and Saroja Devi became the 10th and 11th recipients of Karnataka Ratna, also posthumously.

The government is likely to finalise the next winners of the Karnataka Ratna sometime early 2026, according to sources in the government.

Awardees so far...

WINNER	FIELD	YEAR
KV Puttappa (Kuvempu)	Literature	1992
Rajkumar	Film	1992
S Nijalingappa	Politics	1999
CNR Rao	Science	2000
Bhimsen Joshi	Music	2004
Sri Shivakumara Swami	Social Service	2006
D Javare Gowda	Literature	2008
D Veerendra Heggade	Social Service, Rural Development	2009
Puneeth Rajkumar (posthumous)	Film, Social Service	2022
Vishnuvardhan (posthumous)	Film	2025
B Saroja Devi (posthumous)	Film	2025

DEMANDS FOR POSTHUMOUS AWARDS

Ambareesh · S M Krishna · Saalumarada Thimmakka · S L Bhyrappa · Shamanur Shivashankarappa

Siddaramaiah, DKS slam Kerala CM for 'bulldozer' barb

'His statements politically motivated, devoid of facts'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar launched a broadside against Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan for his statement criticising the "brutal normalisation of the bulldozer raj" in Bengaluru.

On Friday, Vijayan criticised the Congress government for evicting Muslim families in Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout.

"Sadly, the Sangh Parivar's anti-minority politics is now being executed under a Congress government in Karnataka," he had said.

Siddaramaiah slammed Vijayan, calling his statement "politically motivated" and devoid of facts.

"There is a fundamental difference between 'bulldozer justice' and the lawful removal of illegal encroachments," Siddaramaiah said.

"Several people had illegally erected makeshift shelters at the waste-disposal site in the Kogilu Layout near Yelahanka. It is not a place suitable for human habitation. Despite issuing notices on multiple occasions directing the families to relocate, the residents failed to comply," Siddaramaiah said.

"Under these circumstances, it became unavoidable to clear the encroachment and vacate the site," the chief minister said, adding that the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has been asked to arrange temporary shelter, food and other essentials to all those affected.

"While most of the occupants were migrant workers and not residents, the government will nevertheless ensure appropriate accommodation on humanitarian grounds," he added. A miffed Shivakumar asked Vijayan to keep out of Karnataka affairs.

He charged that Vijayan made the statement keeping the upcoming Kerala elections in mind.

"The land, which was cleared of encroachment, was a solid waste pit," Shivakumar, who is in charge of Bengaluru Urban Development, said.

"The land mafia sets up slums to encroach upon public property at a later stage. We won't let that happen," he said.

Shivakumar said his government does not follow the 'bulldozer culture' now.

"We are only protecting government land in the middle of the city," he said, adding that he would report Vijayan's statement and the Congress' response to the party's top brass and Kerala counterparts.

Shivakumar pointed out that Bengaluru does not have many slums "like other cities" and added that the eviction had nothing to do with minorities."

Mysuru zoo loses African hunting Cheetah Bruke

MYSURU, DHNS: The Mysuru zoo lost male African hunting cheetah, Bruke, on Saturday.

According to P Anusha, executive director of the zoo, the six years and eight months old cheetah succumbed to Meningitis at around 1.30 am. He had refused food intake for last three days. Bruke was treated by veterinarians of the zoo, but did not respond to treatment. He was acquired from Anne Van Dyke Cheetah Centre, South Africa, on Aug 17, 2020.

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA EXTRA-ORDINARY APPELLATE JURISDICTION SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CIVIL) No. 8347 OF 2025 WITH PRAYER FOR INTERIM RELIEF

S LINGANNA AND OTHERS ... Petitioner(s)/Appellant(s)
VERSUS
NANJAVUDOOTHA SWAMIJI ....Respondent(s)
To.
NANJAVUDOOTHA SWAMIJI
S/O PEETHADHIPATHI OF GURUGUNDA BRAMHESHWARA SWAMY MUTT, PATTANAYAKANA HALLI, SIRA TALUK, TUMKUR DISTRICT-572 135, DISTRICT-TUMAKURU, KARNATAKA -572135
PID: 312024/2025 FOR R[1] IN SLP(C) NO.8347/2025 (SEC IV-A)

WHEREAS the Petition for Special Leave to Appeal with prayer for interim relief above mentioned filed in the Registry by M/s. S-LEGAL ASSOCIATES, Advocate on behalf of the Petitioner(s) above named was listed for hearing before this Court on 01st April, 2025, when the Court was pleased to pass the following order:-

1. Issue notice, returnable in four weeks.
2. Dasti service, in addition, is permitted.
3. Until further orders, there shall be stay of impugned order passed by the High Court."

AND WHEREAS, the matter above-mentioned was listed before Hon'ble Court (In Chambers) on 15th December, 2025, When the following order was passed:-

"IA No. 272486/2025:

1. Application seeking substituted service upon sole respondent is allowed.
2. Notice to be published in newspapers viz. 'Prajavani' and 'Praja Pragathi' in Kannada Language (Local Language Newspaper) and Deccan Herald (English Language Newspaper).
3. Learned counsel for the petitioner to file proof of service along with an affidavit.
4. List after four weeks."

NOW, THEREFORE, TAKE NOTICE that the above petition with prayer for interim relief along with application for EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T. will be posted for hearing before this Court in due course and you may enter appearance before this Court either in person or through an advocate on record of this Court duly appointed by you in that behalf within 30 days from the date of service of notice. You may thereafter show cause to the Court on the day that may subsequently be specified as to why Special Leave Petition and interim relief as prayed be not granted and the resultant appeal be not allowed.

You may file your affidavit in opposition to the petition as provided under Rule 14(1) of Order XXI, S.C.R.2013 within 30 days from the date of receipt of notice or not later than 2 weeks before the date appointed for hearing, whichever be earlier, but shall do so duly by setting out the grounds in opposition to the questions of law of grounds set out in the SLP's and may produce such pleadings and documents filed before the Court/ Tribunal against whose order the SLP is filed and shall also set out the grounds for not granting interim order or for vacating interim order it already granted. TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that if you fail to enter appearance as aforesaid, no further notice shall be given to you even after the grant of special leave for hearing of the resultant appeal and the matter above mentioned shall be disposed of in your absence.

Dated 22nd December, 2025

Sd/-
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

Copy to
1 M/s. S-legal Associates (adv.)
*Counsel for Petitioner is required to file Affidavit of paper publication along with the proof of publication well before next date of listing.

Sd/-
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

Important Notice
LEGAL AID

(1) Legal Services of an advocate is provided by the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee and the Supreme Court Middle Income Group Legal Aid Society to eligible litigants.
For further information, please contact the Secretary, Supreme Court Legal Services Committee or the Member Secretary, Supreme Court Middle Income Group Legal Aid Society, 107-108, Lawyers' Chambers, R.K. Jain Block Near Post Office, Supreme Court Compound, Tilak Marg, New Delhi-110001 (Tel. Nos.011-23116353,23116354 (Additional Building Complex) and 011-23381257 (Front Office))

MEDIATION

(2) The facility of amicable settlement of disputes by trained mediators in cases pending in the Supreme Court is now available in the Supreme Court.
For further information, please contact the Coordinator, Supreme Court Mediation Centre, 109, Lawyers Chambers, R.K. Jain Block Near Post Office, Supreme Court Compound, Tilak Marg. New Delhi-110001 (Tel No. 011-23071432)

Army intensifies winter ops in J&K to flush out Pak terrorists

NEW DELHI, PTI

Amid freezing temperatures and treacherous terrains, the Indian Army has intensified its counter-terrorism operations across Kishtwar and Doda districts in Jammu and Kashmir to pursue and neutralise Pakistani terrorists attempting to exploit the harsh winter for concealment, sources said on Saturday.

Traditionally, the onset of the 40-day 'Chillai Kalan', the harshest phase of winter in the Kashmir Valley from December 21 to January 31, ushers in a 'temporary lull' in terrorist activities, as communication routes close and heavy snowfall isolates the mountain regions, they said.

However, this winter has marked a "decisive shift" in the operational approach of the Army and other security forces, a source in the defence establishment said.

Instead of reducing activities, the Army has adopted a "proactive winter posture", establishing temporary bases and surveillance posts deep within the snow-capped areas to maintain pressure on the possible terrorist hideouts, the sources said.

Operating in sub-zero temperatures with limited visibility, the Army patrols have been regularly traversing the high-altitude ridgelines, valleys, and forested areas to "deny the terrorists any sanctuary", they added.

The shift, according to experts, signifies an evolution in counter-terrorism tactics, underlining both the Army's adaptability and its resolve to maintain operational momentum, irrespective of the weather or terrain.

According to assessments by various intelligence agencies, there are "approximately 30-35 Pakistani terrorists" in the Jammu region currently, defence sources said.

Inputs gathered over the past few months suggest that these Pakistani terrorist groups, finding themselves cornered by successful counter-terror operations, have shifted deeper into the higher and middle-mountain reaches of the region, areas now devoid of habitation, they said.

These terrorists are believed to be seeking temporary winter hideouts to evade detection and avoid a direct confrontation with the security forces.

Indian jab-maker objects to Aus advisory on counterfeit shots

Says only one batch had problems

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

A Central government-owned vaccine manufacturer has requested that an Australian health agency review a health advisory on the anti-rabies vaccine Abhayrab, following an alert by that country's authorities to its citizens about multiple batches of counterfeits being in circulation since November 2023.

The vaccine-maker, Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), said the counterfeit product belonged to only one particular batch, which it said has been taken off the shelf. It added that such a general advisory would trigger "unnecessary anxiety among medical professionals and the general public."

In its alert, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) said: "Counterfeit batches of rabies vaccine Abhayrab have been circulating in India since November 2023. People who have received the counterfeit vaccine may not be fully protected against rabies."

It added: "People who have received Abhayrab, or an unknown rabies vaccine brand, in India from November 1, 2023, onwards are advised to see their healthcare provider to check if replacement doses are needed."

It also said: "Clinicians should offer replacement doses with a rabies vaccine registered in Australia to people who have received Abhayrab or an unknown rabies vaccine brand in India."

The IIL has written to the Australian agency strongly refuting the "over-cautionary and misplaced reference" to a batch of the vaccine manufactured in March 2024. It said it proactively identified a packaging anomaly in one specific batch in January 2025, notified Indian regulators and law enforcement agencies, lodged a formal complaint, and worked closely with authorities to ensure swift action.

In its December 25 reply, the IIL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board, said the counterfeit belonged to only one batch (No KA24014).

"This was an isolated incident, and the counterfeit batch is no longer available," said the company in a statement on Saturday.

It also requested that the ATAGI "consider reviewing the advisory notification" to mitigate "any negative impact on public trust in vaccines".

It also said: "A clarification by the ATAGI stating that the reported counterfeit incident is confined to a specific batch would greatly contribute to ensuring safety while avoiding unnecessary anxiety among medical professionals and the general public."

The manufacturer also said it supplied more than 21 crore doses of Abhayrab vaccine to Indian and international markets. The shot has a share of 40% of the national anti-rabies vaccine market.

Digvijaya causes stir, praises BJP-RSS, posts Modi pic

Digvijaya Singh, from Page 3

"Rahul Gandhi-ji you are absolutely 'bang on' in matters of socio-economic issues. But now, please look at Congress also. Like the Election Commission needs reforms, so does Congress. You have started with 'Sangathan Surjan' but we need more pragmatic decentralised functioning. I am sure you would do it because I know you can do it. The only problem is that it is not easy to 'convince' you," he said.

At the meeting, sources said Singh raised concerns over the decision-making process, claiming that there is "a lot of over centralisation".

He said district and state presidents are being appointed but no committees are formed at any levels.

He said RSS and BJP have a strong organisation and if one has to fight it, Congress needs to strengthen itself.

He also questioned why the decision to set up the Election Management Committee, which was part of 'Udaipur Nav Sankalp Declaration', at the national and state levels was not implemented.

While acknowledging the need for organisational revamp, a section of the leaders said Congress has its own history and does not need lessons from RSS-BJP.

In his opening remarks, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the appointment of new district presidents has been completed in nearly 500 districts across the country and the process will be completed in the remaining districts in the next 120 days.

"But the matter is not limited to appointments alone. We must make the organisation active, accountable and combative at the state, district, block, mandal and booth levels," he said.

'Jawahar ke Lal'

Seeking to corner the Congress, senior BJP MP Sudhanshu Trivedi told reporters, "The Congress leadership is 'Jawahar ke Lal', so they are upside down, and therefore they have brought their party to an upside-down state while our prime minister is a 'Gudri Ke Lal'.

He rose from the bottom to the top, and he is taking the party from the bottom to the top as well.

Allu Arjun named in chargesheet...

Allu Arjun, from Page 3

"Following a comprehensive and detailed probe, a chargesheet was filed before the court on Dec 24. A total of 23 accused persons have been chargesheeted. Of these, 14 have been arrested, while nine others who secured anticipatory bail were served notices".

The probe highlighted serious lapses in event planning, crowd management and security arrangements.

According to police, the tragedy resulted from gross negligence and failure to adhere to prescribed safety protocols. The probe revealed that despite police denying permission for Arjun's appearance, he allegedly proceeded with visit without proper coordination with local authorities.

The chargesheet also named his personal manager, staff members and 8 private security personnel whose actions reportedly worsened the situation.

The theatre management has been accused of negligence, particularly for failing to ensure separate entry and exit points for VIP guests.

Charges under Sec 304-A of IPC (causing death by negligence) & relevant provisions of BNS pertaining to causing hurt and endangering public safety have been invoked.

Arjun was briefly arrested in December last year and spent a night in judicial custody before getting bail.

KARNATAKA STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
#49, "Parisara Bhavan", 1st to 5th Floor, Church Street,
Bengaluru-560001, Karnataka,
Phone: 25581383, 25589112, 25586520, Fax: 080-25586321
E-mail: ho@kspcb.gov.in, Website: https://kspcb.karnataka.gov.in

No. PCB 126 INFRA EPH 2023/3895 Date:24/12/2025

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTIFICATION

Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board has proposed for development of "Hassan Industrial Area" in an extent of 572.3 Acres (231.6 Hectares) located at Kachanayakanahalli Village, Doddahonnenahalli Vilage & Doddabasavanahalli Village of Shanthigrama Hobli & Bustenahalli Village, Kasturavalli Village, Bommanayakanahalli Village, Gavenahalli Village & Aduvalli Village of Kasaba Hobli, Hassan Taluk, Hassan District. The Project requires Environmental Clearance as per EIA Notification dated 14.09.2006, and it is required to conduct Environmental Public Hearing process. Accordingly, the Project Proponent has obtained Terms of Reference (ToR) issued by the State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority -Karnataka dated 02.03.2023 vide File No. SEIAA 15 IND 2023, proposal No.SIA/KA/INFRA1/419331/2023. As per project proponent request letter No. KIADB/HSN/DO/2023-24, dated: 08.08.2023 & RO-Hasan letter No. KSPCB/RO (Hassan)/EPH/2025-26/1303, dated: 02.12.2025, the Environmental Public hearing is scheduled by the Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District on **29th January 2026, Thursday at 11.00 AM.** The Environmental Public Hearing is being conducted by the Board as per details given below.

1. Name of the Company & Address: Executive Engineer, Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board, Zonal Office, Industrial Development Centre, H.N Pura Road, Hassan.

2. Proposed location of the project : "Hassan Industrial Area" in an extent of 572.3 Acres (231.6 Hectares) located at Kachanayakanahalli Village, Doddahonnenahalli Vilage & Doddabasavanahalli Village of Shanthigrama Hobli & Bustenahalli Village, Kasturavalli Village, Bommanayakanahalli Village, Gavenahalli Village & Aduvalli Village of Kasaba Hobli, Hassan Taluk, Hassan District.

3. Details of activity : Development of "Hassan Industrial Area" project falls under 7 (c) 'B' Category as per the EIA notification, 2006 in an extent of 572.3 Acres (231.6 Hectares) located at Kachanayakanahalli Village, Doddahonnenahalli Vilage & Doddabasavanahalli Village of Shanthigrama Hobli & Bustenahalli Village, Kasturavalli Village, Bommanayakanahalli Village, Gavenahalli Village & Aduvalli Village of Kasaba Hobli, Hassan Taluk, Hassan District.

4. Date, time and venue of Public hearing : Date: 29th January 2026, (Thursday) Time: 11.00 AM, Place: Proposed project site at Kachanayakanahalli Village, Shanthigrama Hobli, Hasan Taluk & District.

5. Capital Investment : Rs.178.49Cr. (Project cost)

6. Places of availability of project documents kept open for public : (1) Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District. **(2)** Office of the Chief Executive Officer, Hassan District. **(3)** District Industries Centre, Hassan District. **(4)** Office of Tahasildar, Hassan Taluk, Hassan District. **(5)** Taluk Panchayath office, Hassan Taluk, Hassan District. **(6)** Hassan City Municipal Council, B.M. Road, Santhepete Circle, Hassan. **(7)** Grama Panchayath Office, Doddagenegere, Hassan District. **(8)** Grama Panchayath Office, Kowshika, Hassan District. **(9)** Office of the Senior Environmental Officer- Mysuru, Plot No.436-D, 1st Floor, Hebbal Industrial Area, K.R.S Road, Metagalli, Mysuru-570016. **(10)** Office of the Regional Officer, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, "Parisara Bhavan", Plot No. 1-A, B.Katihalli Industrial Area, B.M.Road, Hassan-573201. **(11)** Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change, South Zone Office, E-3/240, Kendriya Sadan, 4th Floor, E&F Wings, 17th Main Road, 2nd Block, Koramangala, Bengaluru – 560 034. **(12)** State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority-Karnataka (SEIAA), 4th Gate, 7th Floor, Forest Ecology and Environmental Department, MS Building, Bengaluru -560001 **(13)** HELP DESK, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, Ground Floor, No.49, Parisara Bhavan, Church Street, Bengaluru – 560 001.

NOTE: Suggestions, views, comments and objections of interested bonafide residents, environmental groups and others located at project site who are likely to be affected by the proposed project are invited, within 30 days from the date of publication of this Notification. They can also make oral/written/E-Mail suggestions to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board/Chairman, Environmental Public Hearing Committee (Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District). Interested public can participate in the Public Hearing at the above place. For details, please visit our website: **https://kspcb.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Member Secretary

Our motto is to minimize waste generation through judicious use of natural resources

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Chickpet Division
8th Main, 2nd block Jayanagar, Kanakanapalya, Bangalore-560011

No. EE/CKP/E-PRO/07/2025-26 Dated : 26.12.2025

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER

(Single & Two Cover) (Only through E-Procurement : http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)
The Executive Engineer (Chickpete Division), BCCC, Bangalore invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / National Highway or any State Government Organizations for the construction of work detailed in the table below.

Name of the Work : (1) Annual Maintenance of roads and footpaths in ward Jurisdiction area in Ward No 160, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 30.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 75,000/-, Category : Other**

(2) Annual Maintenance of roads and footpaths in ward Jurisdiction area in Ward No 161, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 30.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 30,000/-, Category : CAT-I**

(3) Annual Maintenance of roads and footpaths in ward Jurisdiction area in Ward No 162, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 30.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 75,000/-, Category : Other**

(4) Annual Maintenance of roads and footpaths in ward Jurisdiction area in Ward No 163, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 30.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 30,000/-, Category : CAT-II(A)**

(5) Annual Maintenance of roads and footpaths in ward Jurisdiction area in Ward No 164, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 30.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 75,000/-, Category : Other**

(6) Desilting of drains and Maintenance of ward Jurisdiction area in Ward No 165, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 30.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 30,000/-, Category : SC**

(7) Providing Pothole filling to roads in Dharmarayaswamy Temple subdivsion for the year of 2025-26, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 60.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 1,20,000/-, Category : Other**

(8) Providing Pothole filling to roads in Visweshwarapuram sub-divsion for the year of 2025-26, **Amount Put to Tender : Rs. 60.00 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 60,000/-, Category : ST**

Calender of Events : (1) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before **16.00 hours on 08.01.2026** (2) Pre-bid meeting will be held on **03.01.2026 at 15.00** in the office of the Executive Engineer, Chickpete Division, No. 194, T Mariyappa Road, Opp to Lalbagh South Gate, Siddapura Circle, Bangalore-560011 (3) Last Date for uploading the Filled Tender Document is **08.01.2026 up to 16.00** (4) Date of Technical bid opening of Tenders is on **09.01.2026 by 16.30** (5) Date of Financial bid Opening of Tenders is on after Technical bid approved.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer, Chikpete Division

Government of Karnataka
Public Works Department
Special Division, Hunsur

Tender Notification
(Through https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)
IFT No: 15/2025-26 Date: 24-12-2025

On behalf of Governor of Karnataka the undersigned has invited itemised tender for **36-works** related to Hunsur Division as per terms and conditions of "standard tender documents" **KW-1 & KW-4** from the eligible registered contactors under PWD through kppp Portal. Maximum amount put to tender **Rs.413.07** lakhs and Minimum amount put to tender **Rs.1.09 lakhs**, Maximum **EMD** amount of **Rs. 6,20,000/-** and Minimum **EMD** amount of **Rs.2,800/-** Tender documents downloaded date is **24.12.2025** from https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in website and Last date for submission of filled tender documents is, **Sl.no 1 to 33 Dt: 05.01.2026** and Sl.no 34 Dt: 08.01.2026 and **Sl.no 35&36 Dt: 23.01.2026** upto 16.00 Hours. Period for completion of works **(including monsoon)** Maximum 6-Months & Minimun 1-Months For more details visit the undersigned during office working hours.

Note:- (1) The employer reserves the rights to Reject or Accept any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons. **(2)** Tender extension/Addendum/Corrigendum etc, will be notified only in KPP Portal and will not be published in news papers.

Sd/-Executive Engineer
PWD, Special Division, Hunsur

DIPR/DDMYS/1431/KSMCA/815/2025-26

Drugs & arms seized, 966 held in Delhi ahead of New Year

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Delhi Police has apprehended 966 people and seized arms, drugs, illegal liquor and vehicles during a large-scale preventive crackdown in southeast Delhi ahead of New Year celebrations, an official said on Saturday.

The operation, namely Operation Aaghat 3.0, was launched to curb organised crime, street offences, and the activities of habitual criminals in view of heightened public movement during year-end festivities, they said.

Of the total, 331 accused were arrested under the Delhi Excise Act, NDPS Act and the Public Gambling Act, while 504 people were apprehended under various preventive provisions, the police said.

As part of targeted action, police apprehended 116 listed bad characters, arrested five auto-lifters and four proclaimed offenders, officials added.

During the operation, police recovered 21 country-made pistols, 20 live cartridges and 27 knives under the Arms Act. They also seized 12,258 quarters of illicit liquor, 6.01 kg of ganja and Rs 2.36 lakh from gamblers.

A total of 310 mobile phones, six two-wheelers and one four-wheeler were also recovered, the police said.

In addition, action was taken against 1,306 persons under the Delhi Police Act, while 231 two-wheelers were seized for violations, the officials said.

The crackdown was carried out with over 600 police personnel deployed across the district.

The police said the operation was aimed at preventing any untoward incident during New Year celebrations, particularly in residential areas and jhuggi clusters, and to deter organised crime networks and habitual offenders.

Relaxation in liquor sale timings on December 31

BENGALURU, DHNS: In view of New Year celebrations, Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh has issued an order permitting the sale and consumption of liquor by special occasional excise licence holders (CL-5) from 6 am on December 31 till 1 am late at night.

On regular days, CL-5 licence holders are allowed to sell liquor only between 10.30 am and midnight.

For occasions, such as weddings, birthday celebrations, receptions and other special events, a temporary CL-5 licence is required for the consumption of liquor.

The excise department issues this licence for just one day. Sources said CL-5 licence holders must procure and sell liquor strictly in accordance with the department rules.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over the state.

Forecast Dec 28: Mainly clear sky. Fog/Mist likely during early morning hours in some areas.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	27.8	14.8	0.0
Bidar	26.8	10.0	0.0
Vijayapura	28.2	10.0	0.0
Dharwad	27.8	12.0	0.0
Haveri	29.8	13.6	0.0
Kalaburagi	30.8	15.4	0.0
Raichur	28.6	14.6	0.0
COASTAL			
Honnavar	34.0	18.8	0.0
Karwar	35.2	20.4	0.0
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	32.1	20.8	0.0

INTERIOR SOUTH

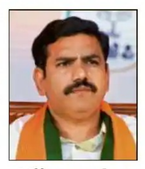
Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	NA	0.0
Bengaluru	26.8	15.9	0.0
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	--	--	--
Chikkamagaluru	--	--	--
Chitradurga	28.5	16.1	0.0
Davangere	29.0	12.5	0.0
Hassan	28.8	8.1	0.0
Mysuru	28.2	13.0	0.0
Madikeri	--	--	--
Kolar	28.0	11.2	0.0
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	21.0	8.0	NIL
Kolkata	24.0	14.0	NIL
Mumbai	29.0	23.0	NA
Chennai	28.0	24.0	NA
Pune	28.0	11.0	NA
Hyderabad	27.0	13.0	NA
Th'puram	32.0	23.0	NIL

I only expressed sentiments of party workers: BYV

'Will abide by leaders, HDD, HDK on truck with JD(S) for local body polls'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra on Saturday clarified that he only expressed the opinion of party workers on BJP coming to power on its own by winning 140 seats. His reaction comes a day after JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda said that alliance with BJP would be "difficult" for urban local body polls.


Vijayendra

"I have never said there will be no alliance for local body elections. Ultimately we will listen to our central leadership. We have respect for former prime minister Deve Gowda. He is a statesman. The JD(S) has joined hands with NDA to strengthen Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hands," Vijayendra stated.

He added that he will abide by the decision of the party central leadership, Deve Gowda and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy.

Vijayendra said every time, BJP has been deprived of clear majority by 5–10 seats. It is the expectation of the workers that BJP should come to power in the state.

"In recent local body elections, BJP secured majority. As president of the party, it is my duty to express aspirations of the workers. We are happy that Deve Gowda has expressed his opinion. We listen to what seniors say. There is no confusion in this" he added.

He accused the state government of following "anti-Hindu" policies.

"In Dharmasthala issue, the propaganda caused mental harassment to devotees. At the behest of urban Naxals, the CM overnight formed SIT and took a decision that hurt sentiments of crores of devotees. Who will pay the price for this propaganda? The CM has not apologised even today. The evil forces behind the conspiracy have not been exposed," he alleged.

"During the session, they brought a bill on hate speech and passed it without allowing discussion. If police arrested those illegally transporting cows and seized vehicles, bail had to be obtained from court. But government proposed an amendment, allowing police to grant bail at the station and release vehicles on bond. Is this not hurting Hindu sentiments?" the state BJP chief sought to know.

36 wickets in under 2 days: MCG pitch draws heavy flak

MCG pitch, from Page 3

Pietersen even drew India into the issue, saying how the country would have been "hammered" for rolling out a spin-friendly pitch.

"India ALWAYS gets hammered when wickets fall like crazy on day 1 of a Test and so I hope that Australia gets the same scrutiny! Fair is fair!" wrote former England skipper on X.

The entire Ashes series so far has seen only 13 days' of action out of the total 20 match days.

Earlier, the first Test in Perth too ended inside two days with the Aussies clinching it by eight wickets.

A surprised Karthik termed the pitch "ordinary".

"MCG has produced an ordinary pitch here. Can't believe 2 out of the 4 Ashes Tests could end in 2 days. For all the hype, 4 Ashes Tests have happened in just 13 days," voiced Karthik.

Former India opener Aakash Chopra was more direct in his opinion.

"Not a single over of spin in 1.5 days of a Test match.

27 wickets have fallen already. Imagine the meltdown if not a single over of pace was bowled for that long in the subcontinent," wrote Chopra in social media accounts.

In fact, both Australia and England entered the fourth Test without a frontline spinner, and did not even give a chance to part-timers like Travis Head or Will Jacks.

ECOLOGICAL OUTCRY Most of the ancient range may fall outside protection

Parties to protesters, Rajasthan decries Aravalli redefinition

RAKHEE ROYTALUKDAR

Facing backlash over the new 100-metre Aravalli Hill benchmark, the Central government on Wednesday directed states to enforce a complete ban on any new mining lease in the range. However, the Opposition Congress and protesters were not entirely convinced.

Stretching through Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, and Gujarat, the two-billion-year-old mountain range acts as a critical ecological spine for this region. It forms a natural barrier against desertification, and plays a vital role in climate regulation, groundwater recharge and biodiversity conservation.

Parts of the Aravallis are protected as tiger reserves, national parks, eco-sensitive zones, and wetlands, where mining and developmental activities are banned. However, the region is rich in minerals like limestone, marble, sandstone, copper, zinc, and tungsten, which have turned it into a mining hub.

A member of 'Aravalli Bachao Sanstha' during a demonstration as part of the Save Aravalli movement in Gurugram. PTI FILE

New benchmark

A committee under the environment secretary recommended a new definition of the Aravalli Hills, which the Supreme Court approved on November 20. Under it, any landform at an elevation of 100 metres or above the local relief — the immediate surrounding areas of a hill — will be considered a part of the Aravalli Hills along with its slopes and adjacent land. Significantly, this benchmark would result in a major part of the range not being counted as Aravallis anymore.

Rajasthan, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the mountain range, is likely to be impacted the most. For the state, the earlier benchmark — prescribed by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) — was 115 m above sea level with a slope of at least 3 degrees. Under this formula, the Aravallis covered 40,483 sq km in 15 districts of Rajasthan — roughly 33% of these districts' total area of 1,23,086 sq km. The 100-m definition would now exclude 99.12% (1,17,527 sq km) of the 1,18,575-sq-km Aravalli Hills.

Environmentalist and Magsaysay winner Rajendra Singh's book Aravalli Par Naya Sankat, while revealing the verified landscape of the range, claims that 1,07,494 sq km of it is up to 20 metres in height, 12,081 sq km is 20-40 m, 5,009 sq km is 40-60 m, 2,656 sq km is 60-80 m, 1,594 sq km is 80-100 m, and only 1,048 sq km has hills above 100 m, which amounts to only 8.7% of the total area.

Govt stand

Facing a barrage of protests, Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav — an MP from Alwar — sought to clarify that only 0.19 % (278 sq km) of the total Aravalli range could be mined.

He said, "The SC has directed that a sustainable mining plan be prepared, as has been done in Saranda, Jharkhand, and permissions will be granted for mining only after that. No permissions will be granted in Delhi, and more than 20 reserve forests and protected areas in the Aravallis will be protected."

Yadav also said the new definition did not relate to only a hill's elevation but also considered its entire spread at the base. He said as the Aravalli range had been defined as the extent of 500 m between two or more hills, more than 90% of the Aravallis would be protected. Interestingly, the ministry's own data shows that 278 sq km of the total area is already under mining in the Aravallis across Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana.

Environmental activists are up in arms against the new definition. Protests have broken out in several cities, including Udaipur, Sikar, and Jodhpur.

Bhanwar Meghwanshi, activist and author of Pathik Main Aravalli Ka, said: "The Aravallis are not just mountains for us. They are part of our Sindhu-Aravalli cultural identity. But the government is only seeing the minerals underneath."

He added: "Look at the Himalayas: You have made roads and tunnels by disrupting the mountains. Now you have landslides and term them as natural calamities."

The Congress has announced a mass agitation called "Aravalli Bachao" across 19 districts, alleging that the new definition was meant to facilitate large-scale mining in the ranges. Rajasthan Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra even hinted at a nexus between officials and the mining mafia under the BJP rule.

On the occasion of "International Mountain Day" on December 11, civil-society groups in Delhi-NCR, South Haryana, and different Rajasthan districts launched the "Aravalli Virasat Jan Abhiyaan".

Neelam Ahluwalia, a founder-member of the "People for Aravallis", said: "It is a people's campaign to save one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world from being annihilated by senseless definitions and excessive mining."

The Aravallis are home to at least 200 native and migratory bird species, more than 100 butterfly species, and many reptile and mammal species, including leopards and tigers.

Its tree cover helps preserve humidity in the atmosphere, moderate wind velocity, and helps regulate the rainfall pattern. Its weathered rocks, with their natural cracks, allow water to percolate and recharge the groundwater.

The loss of green cover can negatively impact local rainfall patterns and temperature, leading to increased heat stress throughout the Aravalli belt. The loss of the Aravalli hills and forests to mining would also lead to a rise in ambient dust levels, which would lead to worsened air quality.

For local tribals, the Aravallis are an anchor. Lakshmi Garasiya from Sirohi said, "We are from the Garasiya tribe and our lifestyle is linked to the mountains and their forests. We rely on them for food, fuel, medicinal herbs, and raw materials. For us, these mountains are our Gods."

(The writer is a senior journalist)

UP BJP reins in caste-based meets

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Apparently perturbed by a recent meeting of "Brahmin" legislators, mostly from the BJP, where concerns were reportedly raised over the community's "marginalisation" in Uttar Pradesh's caste politics, where concerns were reportedly raised over the community's "marginalisation" in Uttar Pradesh's caste politics.

According to BJP sources here, newly-appointed state president Pankaj Chaudhary told MLAs that such meetings were not "in accordance with the traditions" of the party.

Chaudhary also reportedly warned that any such meeting in the future would be viewed as an act of "indiscipline".

Sources said the party's "Brahmin" MLAs had planned another meeting here on January 5, but it was cancelled following the warning.

"The legislators have been advised not to fall prey to the negative and casteist politics... Such meetings send a wrong message," said a Uttar Pradesh BJP leader here.

The meeting of the "Brahmin" MLAs came close on the heels of a similar meeting by dozens of "Thakur" MLAs, who had said it was for the purpose of forming a "kutumb" (family) of legislators from the community.

Although many of the 50 attending MLAs remained tight-lipped about the discussions at the Brahmin lawmakers' meeting, sources said that several expressed concern over what they perceived as the "marginalisation" of the community in the state's caste politics.

Some Brahmin MLAs said members of their community were being insulted, and that the administration was turning a blind eye to their concerns. The MLAs reportedly stressed the need to be more "assertive" in state politics.

An aide of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called one of the MLAs to inquire about the discussions at the meeting, and was told that it was not a political meeting.

SP leader Shivpal Singh Yadav said the BJP was indulging in politics of caste, and that his party was ready to welcome the MLAs. "They will get due respect in the SP," he said.

LAND DISPUTE

People protest on Saturday as a survey team arrives in Rishikesh following a Supreme Court order to probe the leasing of government forest land. PTI

Cong takes to streets over MGNREGA

Party vows to protect rural job scheme, targets Modi govt

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi arrive for the CWC meeting in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Vowing to protect the UPA-era rural job guarantee law, Congress on Saturday announced a nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' (Save MGNREGA programme) from January 5, claiming the BJP government will have to face people's anger as the new law is aimed at taking money away from the poor and handing it to industrialists like Gautam Adani.

The decision to hold protests across the country through marches and other programmes at state, district, mandal and village levels came at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee chaired by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and attended by senior leaders, including Rahul Gandhi.

At the CWC meet, the issue of attacks on minorities in Bangladesh, on Christians in India during Christmas, organisational issues and upcoming Assembly elections were also discussed.

Both Kharge and Rahul projected the protest as one that argues for a demand-driven, rights-based job programme that will give states their due political and economic freedom. They also placed it as the Modi government's design to concentrate power by depriving states and benefitting a chosen few corporates.

"The Modi government has scrapped MGNREGA, rendering crores of poor and vulnerable people helpless. After kicking the poor in the stomach, the Modi government has stabbed them in the back. Abolishing MGNREGA is an insult to Mahatma Gandhi," Kharge told the leaders.

Announcing the protests, the Congress president said people are angry over the repeal of MGNREGA and the government would have to face the consequences.

Rahul Gandhi claimed that the UPA-era development rights-based concept has been 'destroyed single-handedly by the prime minister' without asking the Rural Development Minister and his cabinet as well as without studying the matter.

He warned that it would cause tremendous pain to the weakest sections, Adivasis, Dalits, OBCs, poor general caste and minorities and it would benefit Adani. That is the purpose of this; to take money away from poor people and hand it to people like Adani," he said.

"This is an attack on the states of India because they are simply taking away money that belongs to state and the decision-making power that belongs to the state," he said.

Book IO for 'colluding' with Sengar: Unnao rape survivor

NEW DELHI, PTI

The 2017 Unnao rape survivor, in which ex-BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted, has approached the CBI seeking the registration of an FIR against the then-investigating officer (IO) for being 'hand in glove' with the former legislator.

The survivor also claimed that she and her family were facing threats from various quarters.

The development comes amid growing disappointment in several quarters after the Delhi High Court recently granted conditional bail to Sengar and suspended his life sentence. Sengar, however, will remain in jail as he is also serving a 10-year term for the custodial death of the survivor's father.

In her complaint, the survivor alleged that the investigating officer conducted the probe dishonestly, with mala fides, and in such a way that Sengar and the other accused may get the benefits of "deliberate lapses and manipulation of facts introduced, and secure a favourable outcome".

She alleged that the officer used forged school documents in the chargesheet, wherein she was shown as a student of a government school and her date of birth was also shown differently, whereas, in reality, she never took admission in that school. She also claimed that the officer mentioned in the chargesheet that she was using the mobile phone of a woman named Heera Singh, even though she never used that phone. Further, several statements were falsely attributed to her in the chargesheet, she claimed.

In the six-page complaint, the survivor, who was a minor at the time of her rape, claimed she filed a complaint earlier as well, but no action was taken.

Citing the trial court order convicting Sengar, where the court questioned the recording of her statement by the IO, she accused the officer of being 'hand in glove' with the accused.

SC to hear CBI plea tomorrow

The Supreme Court will hear a plea filed by the CBI challenging a Delhi High Court order suspending the life sentence of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar on December 29. According to the SC's cause list for December 29, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices J K Maheshwari and Augustine George Masih will hear the plea. Besides the plea filed by the CBI, the SC will also hear a separate petition filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar.

Cops injured as coal mine protest turns violent in Chhattisgarh

RAIGARH, PTI: Several policemen were injured and vehicles were set ablaze after an ongoing protest against a coal mining project turned violent in Tamnar area of Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district on Saturday, officials said.

The mob also stormed into the coal handling plant of Jindal Power Limited, and torched a conveyor belt, two tractors and other vehicles, besides vandalising the office premises, the officials informed.

Tension prevailed after protesters indulged in stone-pelting and set ablaze a police bus, a jeep and an ambulance, besides damaging several other government vehicles, they said.

Villagers from 14 affected villages under the (Gare Pelma) Sector-I coal block in Tamnar area have been staging a sit-in protest at CHP chowk in Libra village since December 12 against a public hearing held for the project on December 8 at Dhaurabhatha, a statement issued by the district administration said.

1.85 lakh apply to enrol as fresh voters in TN

CHENNAI, DHNS: A week after the draft electoral rolls were released, as many as 1.85 lakh voters have applied for enrolling as fresh voters by filling the Form 6, even as political parties continue to file claims and objections with the Election Commission of India.

To help people get the required documents to enrol as voters, the state government has directed officials concerned to issue nativity certificates manually from December 26 to January 25, 2026 and waive the Rs 60 levied for obtaining the same. Currently, the certificates are issued only online.

Saturday also saw special camps being conducted to enrol fresh voters and file objections across the state. The EC said as many as 1.85 lakh people have submitted Form 6 to register as new voters after the draft electoral rolls were released on December 19. Around 1,726 people have filled Form 7 for deletion of name from the electoral roll.

Unmapped voters queue up for SIR hearings in Bengal

A Booth level officer clicks picture of a woman after handing over hearing notice under the Special Intensive Revision of the electoral rolls, in Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal. PTI

KOLKATA, PTI: Hearings under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls began across West Bengal on Saturday, with thousands of 'unmapped' voters queueing up at camps amid confusion and anxiety over discrepancies in their voter details, officials said.

Ankita Mukherjee, a software professional working in Chennai, had to rush to her hometown Barasat in North 24 Parganas after receiving a notice from the Election Commission to attend the hearing on the first day due to discrepancies in her name that surfaced after she submitted her enumeration form online.

Mukhherjee, who was not an adult in 2002, had submitted the names of her parents but the block-level officer of her native place said her data could not be uploaded digitally due to some technicalities and she needed to turn up at the hearing camp at Colony More booth area of Barasat.

"I had to apply for leave due to the emergency and left behind my eight-year-old child and husband, who also works in the IT sector. I had voted in the last Lok Sabha and Assembly polls as there was no need of SIR. However, I am not complaining," she said.

At camps across the state, elderly voters were seen struggling to attend hearings.

At Bhawanipur's Mitra Institution camp, a 75-year-old man with walking difficulties said he was called due to spelling discrepancies in his surname despite his name figuring in the 2002 rolls.

"I had submitted all the details and even had my name in the 2002 list. I was still told by the BLO that there is a confusion about my surname's spelling in the form. He asked me to come and I am here with all the documents. Let's see," he said, refusing to give his name.

In Birbhum's Bolpur, 62-year-old Soumitra Mitra, who had worked in Nagpur for years before returning to Bengal, said he faced difficulties due to lack of voting records from before 2002.

A senior election official said hearings were held at 3,234 centres across the state on Saturday.

Around 32 lakh unmapped voters, those unable to establish linkage with 2002 electoral rolls, will be called in 1st phase.

Assam draft voter list flags 10.56 lakh names

GUWAHATI, PTI: The names of 10.56 lakh voters have been deleted in the draft electoral rolls for Assam, where Assembly polls would be in less than six months.

According to the integrated draft rolls released by the Election Commission on Saturday, the state has a total of 2,51,09,754 voters, excluding 93,021 D-Voters or doubtful voters. Additionally, the names of 10,56,291 voters have been deleted due to death, shifting, or multiple entries.

D-Voters are a category of voters in Assam who have been disenfranchised by the government on account of their alleged lack of proper citizenship credentials. D-Voters are determined by special tribunals under the Foreigners Act, 1946. The draft rolls were published after house-to-house verification of the Special Revision was held from November 22 to December 20.

Assam Assembly polls a fight to protect identity: CM Sarma

GUWAHATI, PTI: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that the upcoming Assembly elections will be a fight to protect 'swadesh' (nation) and 'swajati' (own community), along with the identity, land and culture of the people of the state.

Himanta Biswa Sarma

BJP represents the last light of hope that will ensure that the state is not pushed into an abyss of darkness by infiltrators from Bangladesh, the chief minister said at the party's executive meeting.

"The forthcoming elections are not about hopes and aspirations. It is about dedicating oneself to the cause of protecting 'swadesh' and 'swajati'. I am sure people know that the BJP is their last hope. They will vote for us, and we will win this election," Sarma said.

He alleged that the "weakness of the Congress and its politics of polarisation" led to the gradual creation of "another civilisation which now has a 1.5 crore-strong population".

"In the 2011 Census, when we see the breakup of Hindus and Muslims, we find the latter comprise 34%, and if we exclude the 3% Muslims of Assamese origin, we find that infiltrators comprise 31%," he claimed. There was no census in 2021 and when it happens in 2027, the population of Muslims of Bangladeshi origin is estimated to be around 40%.

"Some may say that all can coexist as our religion welcomes and includes all, but the recent developments in Bangladesh have shown us that they believe in exclusiveness," Sarma said.

The CM said that when Dipu Das can be burnt alive in Bangladesh, "the Assamese people can well imagine what the situation in the state will be after 20 years".

"We will have to fight relentlessly to protect our 'jati, mati and bheti' (community, land and roots)," he added.

'Revealing attire' row: Telugu actor appears before women's panel

HYDERABAD, DHNS: Telugu actor Sivaji appeared before the Telangana State Commission for Women on Saturday to offer an explanation regarding his controversial remarks about women recently.

The panel summoned him under Section 16(1)(b) of the Telangana Women's Commission Act, 1998.

A few days ago, at a pre-release event for his upcoming film *Dandora*, he urged women actors not to wear revealing outfits, which sparked widespread criticism. His remarks were met with backlash from women's rights groups and public figures, who demanded accountability.

Sivaji subsequently issued a public apology.

रजिस्ट्री सं. डी.एल.- 33004/99 REGD. No. D. L.-33004/99

भारत का राजपत्र
The Gazette of India

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असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग II— खण्ड 3— ईप-खण्ड (ii) PART
II—Section 3—Sub-section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

सं. 5581] नई दिल्ली, सोमवार, दिसम्बर 15, 2025/अग्रहायण 24, 1947
No. 5581] NEW DELHI, MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2025/AGRAHAYANA 24, 1947

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

SPECIAL LAND ACQUISITION OFFICER AND COMPETENT AUTHORITY N.H.169A AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER,

KUNDAPURA SUB-DIVISION, KUNDAPURA

PUBLIC NOTICE

In exercise of the powers under section 3D (1) and (2) of National Highways Act 1956 (48 of 1956) (herein after referred to as the said Act) With it amendment from time to time, the Central Government vide their Gazette Notification 1598(E) Dated:02/04/2025 have required the lands indicated in the schedule hereunder for widening of National Highway 169A in the stretch of land from 51.600 to Km. 76.200 (Hebri to Parkala) and from Km 85.200 to Km. 88.900 (Karavali Junction to Malpe) (Thirthahalli - Udupi section); in the district of UDUPI in the state of KARNATAKA.

Under the provisions of Sub-Section (1),(2),(3) and (4) of section 3G of the said Act the public notice is hereby issued to the land owners and interested persons in such land to appear in person or by an agent or by a legal practitioner on the following date and time before the Special Land Acquisition Officer and Competent Authority N.H.169A and Assistant Commissioner, Kudapura Sub-division Kundapura and to state the nature of their respective Interest in such land along with the copies of the documents such as 1) Original records 2) Sale/Partition/Other deeds of title 3) R.T.Cs 4) Copy of mutation register 5) Khatha extract issued by local body. 6) Encumbrance certificate and any other relevant document.

Sl.No.	Name of the Taluk	Name of the Village	Date, Time & Place
1	UDUPI	1) Ambalapady 2)Moodanidamburu 3) Kodavoor 4) Hebri 5) Shivapura 6) Perdur 7) Bommarabettu 8) Athradi	13.01.2026 at 11.00 am Assistant commissioner Office Kundapura

Sd/-
Rashmi S.R, K.A.S
Special Land Acquisition Officer and Competent Authority N.H.169A and Assistant Commissioner, Kundapura Sub-division Kundapura

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 15th December, 2025

S.O. 5776(E).—Whereas by the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, **1598(E) Dated:02/04/2025**, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub- section (ii) issued under sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highway Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government declared its intention to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the said notification for building (widening two lane with paved shoulders / four laning etc.), maintenance, management and operation of National Highway No - 169A in the stretch of land from 51.600 to Km 76.200 (Hebri to Parkala) and from Km 85.200 to Km 88.900 (Karavali Junction to Malpe) (Thirthahalli - Udupi section); in the district of UDUPI in the state of KARNATAKA;

And whereas the substance of the said notification has been published in **"Udayavani"** and **"Deccan Herald" both dated 12th April 2025**; under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act;

And whereas the Competent Authority has received objections filed under Section 3-C, considered and settled the same appropriately;

And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the competent authority has submitted its report to the Central Government;

Now, therefore, upon receipt of the said report of the competent authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that the land specified in the said Schedule should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose;

And further, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that on publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, the land specified in the said Schedule shall vest absolutely in the Central Government, free from all encumbrances.

SCHEDULE

Brief description of the land to be acquired, with or without structure, falling within the stretch of land from 51.600 to Km. 76.200 (Hebri to Parkala) and from Km. 85.200 to Km. 88.900 (Karavali Junction to Malpe) (Thirthahalli - Udupi section) on NH169A in the district of UDUPI in the state of KARNATAKA.

State: KARNATAKA **District: UDUPI**

Sl. No.	Survey / Plot Number	Type of Land	Nature of Land	Area (in Hectares)	Name of the Land Owner/ Interested Person
Taluk: Udupi					
Village: Ambalapady					
1	61/3	Private	Garden	0.0243	Jalaja Shedthi W/o Raju shetty, Prabhakara S Shetty S/o Sundara Shetty, P. Venktesh V Kamath S/o Late Rathna bayee, P Vasudeva Kamath S/o Late Rathna bayee, P Anantharaya Kamath S/o Late Rathna bayee, Jayasheela Kamath yaane Anitha Bhaktha D/o Late Rathna bayee, P Sadashiva V Kamath S/o Late Rathna bayee, Vrunda P Shetty D/o Late Lakshmi B Shetty, Usha S Shetty D/o Late Lakshmi B Shetty, P Surendra S/o Late Kanthappa Pandubettu, Mahabala Poojari S/o Kanthappa Poojari, Chinnu Poojarthi, Muthakka Poojarthi
2	62/1	Private	Garden	0.0061	Jalaja S Kalmadi W/o Late Shridhar Kalmadi, Usha Shankar D/o Late Shridhar Kalmadi, Amitha Poojari W/o Shridar Poojari, Kalyanni Poojarthi W/o Kitta Poojari
Village: MOODANIDAMBURU					
3	1/1	Private	Garden	0.0193	Panduranga Poojari, Vasanthi Poojarthi, Jayananda Poojari, Pushpa Poojari
4	1/10	Private	Garden	0.002	Prabhakar Shetty S/o Sundara Shetty
5	1/12	Private	Garden	0.0041	P Rajendra S/o Kanthappa Poojari Udupi
6	1/13	Private	Garden	0.0061	Anni Vas W/o Late Victor Vaas Aliyas Victor Thedoor Vaas, Vinisha Ansita Vaas D/o Late Victor Vaas Aliyas Victor Thedoor Vaas, Vistan Ashely Vaas D/o Late Victor Vaas Aliyas Victor Thedoor Vaas
7	1/2	Private	NAK	0.0162	Sumathi Poojarthi, Sundari Poojarthi
8	1/3	Private	Garden	0.003	Yogish S Kottyan S/o Late B Sundara
9	1/9	Private	Wet	0.0172	Prabhakar S Shetty S/o Sundara Shetty Pandubettu
10	11/12	Private	Wet	0.0112	Srinivas Upadyaya Udupi, Muli Rights - B Venkatesh Prabhu S/o B Ramachandra Prabhu Adi Udupi
11	12/13	Private	Wet	0.005	Seethamma w/o Late Krishna Upadyayaya, Anand U K S/o Late Krishna Upadyayaya, Kusuma U K D/o Late Krishna Upadyayaya, Shripathi U K S/o Late Krishna Upadyayaya,Suresh U K S/o Late Krishna Upadyayaya
12	12/6B2	Private	Dry	0.0415	Sharada Shenoy, Nagesh Shenoy, Jyothi P Shenoy W/o Late A Padmanabha Shenoy, Sathyanarayan Shenoy S/o Late A Padmanabha Shenoy, Vivek Shenoy S/o Late A Padmanabha Shenoy
13	2/1	Private	Wet	0.003	Saraswathi yaane Shantha D/o Beechu Poojarthi
14	2/12	Private	Garden	0.0041	Diwakar Kamath S/o Late Raghavendra Kamath, Prakash Kamath S/o Diwakar Kamath
15	2/22	Private	NAK	0.002	Mumthaz Beghum W/o Ismail Hasan Damudi, Khalid S/o Bhengre Ibrahim Ambalpadi, Other Interested persons State Bank of India
16	2/25	Private	NAK	0.001	Smti. Girija D/o Vaasu Ganiga Pandubettu, Other Interested persons Udupi Cooperative Town Bank.
17	2/30	Private	Dry	0.001	Amitha
18	2/3A2	Private	Wet	0.001	Puttanna Shetty S/o Thukkra Shetty, Leelavathi Shedthi W/o Puttanna Shetty, Gangadhar Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty, Bhaskar P Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty, Yashoda V Shetty D/o Puttanna Shetty, Shantha S Shetty D/o Puttanna Shetty, Ramananda P Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty, Jayanada P Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty
19	2/3A4	Private	Wet	0.002	Bhaskar P Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty
20	2/3A5	Private	Wet	0.001	Jayanada P Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty
21	2/3A6	Private	Wet	0.002	Ramanada P Shetty S/o Puttanna Shetty
22	2/3B10	Private	NAK	0.004	Oobu Poojari
23	2/3B9	Private	NAK	0.001	G.K Khadar yaane G Khadir, Meera D/o Abdul Rahimaan, Khalid S/o Bhengre Ibrahim Ambalpadi, Other Interested persons State Bank of India
24	2/7A	Private	Garden	0.002	Manju Bhat Uudpi, Jaya P D/o Late Veerappa Bangera, Ananda P S/o Late Veerappa Bangera, Suresh P S/o Late Veerappa Bangera, Shrikara Kamath S/o Late Raghavendra Kamath, Taniya Poojari S/o Booda Poojari, Prabhakar Kamath, Savitha G Kamath C/o Late Raghavendra Kamath Pandubettu.
25	2/7C	Private	Garden	0.0011	Prabhakar
26	4/11	Private	NAK	0.002	Suja George W/o Francis Buthello, Santhan Mathais
27	4/12	Private	Wet	0.002	Santhan Mathais
28	4/13	Private	NAK	0.0081	Santhan Mathais
29	4/21	Private	NAK	0.0233	Shekar Thingalaya S/o Shambu Myndan, Geetha Shekar W/o Shekar Thingalaya
30	54/1B	Private	Wet	0.0435	Padma yaane Paddu Sedthi D/o Korapalu Sedthi, Anitha A Lobo W/o Agnel Lobo, Central Govt NH, M/s. Sagar Ganga Shoping centre -Nikila V Shetty D/o Shambi Shetty, Arun T Shetty S/o Thimmappa Shetty, Other Interested persons State Bank of Mysore.
31	6/9A1	Private	NAK	0.1751	Mohamad Riyaz Aziz S/o Abdul Aziz, Fayaz Ahamad Aziz S/o U M Aziz, Farzanan Mohamad Junaid
32	6/9A10	Private	NAK	0.0071	Prathibha Shriyan W/o Surendra K Shriyan
33	6/9A48	Private	Wet	0.0111	Seetharam S/o P Narayan Poojari
34	6/9A6	Private	Wet	0.0243	S Kusha P Nayak S/o S Padmanabha Nayak Ananthanagara, S Athmaram Nayak S/o Padmanabha Nayak Shivalli
35	9/16A	Private	Dry	0.0101	Smt. Jayanthi Kamath W/o Anantharam Kamath
36	9/16B	Private	NAK	0.006	Smt. Jayanthi Kamath W/o Anantharam Kamath, Govt of Karnataka-Commissioner TMC Udupi
37	9/20	Private	Wet	0.0051	Smt. Gulabi Poojarthi W/o Late Thimmappa Poojari, Krishna Kotian S/o Gulabi Poojarthi, Sathish Kotian S/o Gulabi Poojarthi
38	9/4	Private	NAK	0.0101	P Shridhar Kamath S/o P Rathnakar Kamath, A Krishnanda Nayak S/o Late Nagesh Nayak, A Shantharam Nayak, Lakshmi Prabhu, A Ganesh Nayak, Saraswathi Nayak
39	9/5	Private	NAK	0.005	Krishana Kotain S/o Late Thimmappa Poojari- Sukitha P Suvarna, Sathish Kotain S/o Late Thimmappa Poojari -Sukitha P Suvarna, Prashanth K Suvarna S/o Late Keshav Suvarna other Interesed Party State Bank of India
40	9/6	Private	NAK	0.005	Prashanth Suvarna S/o Late Keshav Suvarna, Commissioner TMC Udupi
Village: Kodavoor					
41	181/15	Private	NAK	0.004	Dilshad Begum w/o Abdul Jalil
42	181/2	Private	Wet	0.012	Dilshad Begum w/o Abdul Jalil
43	181/5A	Private	Wet	0.003	Bukki Poojarthi W/o M Dejappa, Peetar Minejus
44	181/5B	Private	Wet	0.003	Sri Joseph Meri Minejus S/o Late Peetar Minejus
45	181/5C	Private	Wet	0.0011	Sri Joseph Meri Minejus S/o Late Peetar Minejus
46	182/15	Private	Garden	0.001	Prabhavathi D Karkera D/o Late Chennamma C Karkera, Madhavi N Thollar D/o Late Chennamma C Karkera, Vidyavathi C Karkera D/o Late Chennamma C Karkera
47	182/19	Private	Garden	0.0021	Theraza Dsouza bayee W/o Siril Dsouza
48	182/20	Private	Garden	0.001	K Ramrao (Mool Geni, Varisu Muli Hakku), George Dsouza
49	182/37	Private	Garden	0.004	Kishan Kumar Shetty S/o Vittal Shetty
50	182/42	Private	Garden	0.0011	Naveen S Kalmadi S/o Indira Poojarthi
51	182/45	Private	Garden	0.0033	Geetha Rohini W/o Naveen Ammanna
52	183/2	Private	Wet	0.0344	Diwakar M Shetty S/o Late Muddanan shetty
53	183/3	Private	Wet	0.0283	Stani Dsouza Bin Stephan Dsouza, Stella Meries Church Kalmadi
54	184/19	Private	Garden	0.0101	Karunakar S/o Late Raaju Poojari, Krishna S/o Late Raaju Poojari
55	184/24	Private	Garden	0.0051	Reshma Fernandiz W/o Late Nevil S L Fernandiz, Namitha Reema Fernandiz Late Nevil S L Fernandiz, Nerisha Kenisha Fernandiz S/o Late Nevil S L Fernandiz, Naveen Clevier Fernandiz S/o Late Joshph Pacheli Fernandiz
56	184/5	Private	NAK	0.0172	Balakishna Kini S/o Late Kalmadi Nagesh Kini, Sugandha N Kini W/o Late Kalmadi Nagesh Kini
57	184/6	Private	Garden	0.0051	K. Ramrao
58	208/3B	Private	NAK	0.004	Hariyappa Kotiain S/o Raaju Kotian, Madina Massidi Malpe, Vineeth Amin S/o Late Subbrao, Vasanth kumar Poojari S/o K Naga Poojari, Commissioner TMC Udupi, Sabhabavan, K Naga Poojari, Other Interested Party Syndicate Bank Kadekar.
59	208/3B2	Private	NAK	0.0698	Madina Massidi Malpe
60	211/19B	Private	Garden	0.003	Gopal Kotian S/o Late Narayan Poojari, Jayaram Kotian S/o Late Narayan Poojari
61	211/20B	Private	Dry	0.0142	Gopal Kotian S/o Late Narayan Poojari, Jayaram Kotian S/o Late Narayan Poojari
62	211/22	Private	NAK	0.0121	Indira D/o Gudda Marakala
63	211/23	Private	Wet	0.0051	Gadahada Krishraya
64	213/10	Private	NAK	0.0061	Udaykumar Shetty S/o Sundara Shetty
65	213/11	Private	Wet	0.0061	Damodara S/o Deju Poojari
66	213/13	Private	Wet	0.0212	Shashikanth Banger S/o Chellappa Poojari, Umesh Manjappa S/o Manjappa Annayya Bangera, Niranjan S/o Narayana J Karkera, Manoranjan Karkera S/o Bhoja Suvarna, Thilak Chandra S/o Harishchandra
67	213/ 2A1A	Private	Garden	0.0061	M. Srinivas Upadyaya - Dr. Ganesh Bhat, Lakshmesha Suvarna S/o Kitta Bangera, Shobha L Suvarna, Lokanath K Suvarna, Pandurang V Poojari
68	213/ 2A1D	Private	NAK	0.004	Shashikala Bhandarkar W/o Padmanabha Bhandarkar
69	216/6A	Government	Karabhu	0.0263	Government
70	221/2C	Private	Garden	0.0091	K Shivananda Kamath S/o Late Sharada Kamath, Hemalatha D/o Late Sharada Kamath, Shyamalatha D/o Late Sharada Kamath, Sudhakr Kalmadi S/o Krishnappa Poojari, Geetha Poojari, Leeladhar Annaji Suvrna, Rohini V Suvrana D/o Late Bukka yaane Bhavani, Deepak S/o Late Kamlalakshi Mahabala amin, Asha D/o Late Kamlalakshi Mahabala amin, Other Intersted Persons Udupi Bus Owners Co operative Society
71	222/1	Private	Wet	0.0182	Sri Shankar Narayan Devaru, Yashoda M Anchan D/o Late Pijju Poojari, Shekar P Palan S/o Late Pijju Poojari, Vasanthi D/o Late Pijju Poojari, Sudhakar Poojari S/o Late Pijju Poojari, Sumathi Sanil D/o Late Pijju Poojari, Akku Poojari Putta Poojari(Moola Geni)
72	222/2	Private	Wet	0.001	Vasanthi Nayak W/o Late K Vittal nayak
73	222/34	Private	Dry	0.002	Mahima D/o Padmanabha Bangera
74	222/35	Private	NAK	0.0061	Padmanabha K Bangera S/o Krishna D Saliyan
75	223/50	Private	NAK	0.001	Sundari Salyan W/o Vittal G Kotian Kalmadi
76	225/1	Private	Garden	0.0012	Rathana Kundar D/o Late Akku Marakalthi, Angare Kundar S/o Late Akku Marakalthi, Indira Kundar, Jayanthi kundar, Baby Karkera, Shivaraj Karkera, Malathi Karkera, Ganesh Karkera, Mallika Karkera
77	225/14	Private	Wet	0.002	Prabhakar S/o Late Krishnappa, Sundari, Krishnappa Bangera, Nalini Loknath, Hemalatha Dayanada Bangera, Vishalakshi Krishnappa

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					Bangera, Shashidhar Rama Salyan S/o Rama Poojari, Malathi Shashidhar W/o Shahshidhar Rama Salyan (Chalu Geni) - Gange Angara Kannvara S/o Seena Poojari
78	225/16	Private	Wet	0.001	Dogu Marakala S/o Kokru Marakala
79	225/22	Private	Wet	0.003	Bhaskar S/o Late Krishnappa Poojari
80	225/23	Private	Wet	0.005	Sundar J Kalmadi S/o Jagnath Karkera
81	225/4	Private	Garden	0.0107	Prabhakar Karkera S/o Late Chinnamma C Karkera, Prabhavathi D Karkera D/o Late Chinnamma C Karkera, Madhavi C Karkera D/o Late Chinnamma C Karkera, Vidyavatjo C Karkera D/o Late Chinnamma C Karkera,
82	225/7	Private	Wet	0.0067	Joseph Minejas S/o Late Cisiliya Minejas
83	255/ 14A2	Private	Garden	0.003	Dr. Mirza S/o Late Muthappa
84	255/ 14B5	Private	Garden	0.0061	K Indira V Samaga C/o Vedavyasa Samaga
85	255/15	Private	NAK	0.001	Panduranga Kini S/o Parashuram Kini, Pallavi Kini W/o Panduranga Kini
86	255/17	Private	Dry	0.001	U. Uday Shankar S/o U. Rama
87	255/21	Private	Garden	0.001	Naveen J Suvarna S/o Jalendra C Suvarna
88	255/25	Private	Garden	0.001	Jalajakshi M W/o Late M Vittobha, Vaibhavi D/o Late M Vittobha, Vyshak S/o Late M Vittobha,
89	260/14	Private	Dry	0.001	The Canara Banking Corporation, M Keshava Pai S/o M Narayana Pai, Saroojini Pai, Madhusudhan Pai, Ushalatha H K W/o Hariyappa Kotian, Hariyappa Kotian S/o Raju, Vinoda, Vijaya Lakshmi, Geetha Latha, Francis Xeviar DSouza, Madhava Pai, Padma Venkatesh Shanbhag, Ganapathi Pai, M Dinesh Pai, Ashalatha Kini, Shivanada Pai, Other Interested Party Syndicate Bank Kadekar, Padma Poojarthi, Prema
Taluk: Hebri					
Village: Hebri					
90	70/1	Private	Dry	0.0121	Ganesh Bhat
91	70/13	Private	NAK	0.0071	Surya Sherigar S/o Padda Sherigar
92	70/15	Private	Dry	0.0091	H. Bhaskar Jois S/o Lakshmi Narayan Jois
93	70/3B3	Private	Wet	0.0081	Siddi Sherigarthi, Ganesh Sherigar, Akshatha, Vasantha, Sharada
94	70/3B7	Private	NAK	0.0162	Sri B Harish Poojari S/o Late Jagnath Poojari
Village: Shivapura					
95	30/13A	Private	Wet	0.0121	Shivapraksh Shetty S/o Rajiva Shetty
96	30/1A	Private	Wet	0.0182	Shivapraksh Shetty S/o Rajiva Shetty
Taluk: Udupi					
Village: Perdur					
97	129/110	Private	NAK	0.0243	Lalitha Marakalthi D/o Late Narshi Marakalthi
98	129/3	Private	Dry	0.027	Udaya Shetty S/o Sanjeeva Shetty, Sri Ananthapadmanabha Devaru, Amba Ballalthi W/o Krishnaiah Hegde, Appi shedthi D/o Muddu Shetty, Other Interested Party Karnataka State Finance Corporation Limited
99	14/6P2	Private	Wet	0.0273	Ramanath Nayak S/o Late Panduranga Nayak, Shaila Nayak W/o Late Ramanath Nayak, Vasantha Shetty S/o Late Susheela Shedthi, Jayanth Shetty, Shashikanth Shetty, Sabitha Shedthi, Sharath Shetty, Sumathi Shetty, Ashok Shetty, Childrens of Late Susheela Shedthi
100	142/1	Private	Dry	0.0243	Dinesh S Hegde S/o Ammanni S Hegde, Appu Shankar Rao Poojari S/o Shankar rao Poojari, Dr. Kailesh Poojari S/o Krishnappa Poojari, Sursh V Bhagvath S/o Vasudev Bhagavath, Panduranga Patil S/o Vittal Patil, H Srinivas Rao S/o S Harihar Rao
101	142/2	Private	NAK	0.004	Bi Dinesh hegde S/o Late Raghva Hegde
102	142/5	Private	Dry	0.0081	Dinesh S Hegde S/o Ammanni S Hegde, Asha Chandrashekar W/o Chandrashekar Bhandari, Devika Premanath W/o Premanath, Prashanth S/o K Krishna Shettigar, Arun Patil S/o Vittal Patil, Suresh R Nayak S/o Ramachandra Nayak, H Srinivas Rao S/o S Harihar Rao, Ramachandra Nayak
103	148/2	Private	Dry	0.0221	Bashella Ivanji Kalyamishanvini Prakruthda Sanchalak & Manger Gladsan Sarchis S/o F S Kottian
104	148/4	Private	Dry	0.0101	Bashella Ivanji Kalyamishanvini Prakruthda Sanchalak & Manger Gladsan Sarchis S/o F S Kottian
105	151/3	Private	NAK	0.0283	Jayasheela R Bangera , Jayashree Ravikumar,
106	152/2	Private	Wet	0.0061	Arundathi K Achila, Chithraranjan Das Shetty, Mrunali B Shetty, RR Gunarathna Shetty, Naveen

1	2	3	4	5	6
					Somayaji S/o Late Krishna Somayaji, Suma D/o Late Krishna Somayaji, Sanjay Somayaji S/o Late Krishna Somayaji
107	153/21	Private	Dry	0.0121	Sheena Kulal S/o Komba Handa
108	153/28	Private	Wet	0.0324	Pushpa Kulal W/o Rama Kulal
109	153/29	Private	Dry	0.0162	Pushpa Kulal W/o Rama Kulal
110	160/1B	Private	Wet	0.0526	Nagaraj Bhandi S/o Late Bhandi Gopal Krishna, Harinarayana Bhandi S/o Late Bhandi Gopal Krishna, Rathnamala rao D/o Late Bhandi Gopal Krishna, Padmanabha Bhandi S/o Late Bhandi Gopal Krishna, Ravindra Bhandi S/o Late Bhandi Gopal Krishna, Ganesh Bhandi S/o Late Bhandi Gopal Krishna, Sharada B, Parjwal Hebbar, Pramod Kumar Bhandi.
111	168/4	Private	Dry	0.0405	Swarnalatha R Shetty, Sulatha H Hegde, Laltiha Heggadthi
112	168/9	Private	Dry	0.004	Swarnalatha R Shetty, Sulatha H Hegde, Laltiha Heggadthi
113	17/1	Private	Wet	0.0162	Rama Handa S/o Late Pokkru Kulal, Govinda Kulal S/o Late Pokkru Kulal, Gopal Kulal S/o Late Pokkru Kulal,, Jalaja Kulathi D/o Late Pokkru Kulal, Rathna Kulathi D/o Late Pokkru Kulal,Rukku Kulalthi D/o Late Pokkru Kulal, Sanjeeva Kulal S/o Late Pokkru Kulal, Sharada Kulalthi D/o Late Pokkru Kulal, Sumithra D/o Late Pokkru Kulal,
114	17/10	Private	Wet	0.0051	Jayanth Shetty, Savitha Aliyas Sabitha Shedthi, Sumathi Shedthi, Sharath Shetty, Ashok Shetty
115	17/11	Private	Wet	0.0121	Savitha Aliyas Sabitha Shedthi
116	17/12	Private	Wet	0.0162	Padmavathi Nayak S/o Late Gopal Nayak,
117	17/2	Private	Wet	0.085	Amba Heggadthi, Vinoda Heggadthi, Akkaiah Poojarthi, Kamala Poojarthi, Appi Poojarthi, Jayanth Shetty Late Sushila Shedthi, Sabitha Shedthi Late Sushila Shedthi, Sharath shetty Late Sushila Shedthi, Sumathi Shedthi Late Sushila Shedthi, Ashok Shetty Late Sushila Shedthi, Jayanthi Shedthi Late Shashikanth Shetty, Deepika Shedthi Late Shashikanth Shetty, Anusha Late Shashikanth Shetty, Divish Late Shashikanth Shetty, Shantha Shedthi Late Vasantha Shetty, Akhila Shetty Late Vasantha Shetty, Ashwath Shetty Late Vasantha Shetty, Arun shetty Late Vasantha Shetty, Other Intersted PersonsRaitha Sahakari Bank Hiriyadka
118	17/4	Private	Wet	0.0121	Sharath Shetty, Jayanth Shetty, Savitha yaane Sabitha Shedthi, Sumathi Shetty, Ashok Shetty, Deepika, Anusha, Divish yaane Divith Shetty
119	17/9	Private	Wet	0.0121	Jayanthi Shedthi, Deepika, Anusha, Divish yaane Divith Shetty
120	170/10	Private	Dry	0.0081	Yashavanthi, Nithayanada, Niranajan, Gunavathi, Manoranjan, Chitharanjan S/o Late Dharnamma Hegde
121	170/11	Private	Dry	0.0202	Yashavanthi, Nithayanada, Niranajan, Gunavathi, Mnaoranjan, Chitharanjan S/o Late Dharnamma Hegde
122	170/4	Private	Wet	0.0243	Jayantha Naik S/o Late Chardu naik
123	170/5	Private	Dry	0.0283	Swarnalatha R Shetty, Sulatha H Hegde, Laltiha Heggadthi
124	189/2	Private	Wet	0.0111	Sunanina Hegde, Manjunath Hegde
125	189/3	Private	Wet	0.0202	Amba Ballalthi W/o B Krishnaiah, Thoggu Moolya S/o Late Naranga Handa, Vanja D/o Late Naranga Handa, Susheela D/o Late Naranga Handa, Gowri S/o Late Naranga Handa, Geetha D/o Late Naranga Handa Other Intrested Party SRSSS
126	243/A3	Private	Wet	0.1214	Yashavanthi, Nithayanada, Niranajan, Gunavathi, Mnaoranjan, Chitharanjan S/o Late Dharnamma Hegde
127	366/2	Private	Dry	0.0081	Yashavanthi, Nithayanada, Niranajan, Gunavathi, Mnaoranjan, Chitharanjan S/o Late Dharnamma Hegde
128	371/10	Private	Dry	0.0263	Sundara Shetty, Other Interested Party Kumbara Gudi Kaigarika Sahakara Sangha Perdoor.
129	371/3	Private	Dry	0.0081	Yashavanthi, Nithayanada, Niranajan, Gunavathi, Mnaoranjan, Chitharanjan S/o Late Dharnamma Hegde
130	371/4	Private	Dry	0.0328	Gulabi Poojarthi, Vasanthi, Sathish, Santhosh Late Kitty Poojarthi, Gopal Poojari, Indira Poojarthi, Vinoda Poojarthi, Sadhu Poojari, Loku Poojari
131	717/1A	Private	Dry	0.0202	Government, Sharada C Rao W/o K Chandrashekar Rao, Dayananda Nayak S/o Krishna Nayak, Vasu Shetty S/o Suryanna Shetty
Village: Bommarubettu					
132	18/26	Private	Wet	0.0121	Prasad H Shetty S/o Hiriyanna Shetty
133	18/27	Private	Wet	0.0172	Sathish Rao S/o Shankaranarayan rao

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134	18/2A1 A1	Private	Dry	0.1396	Mohamad Sayad Haaji S/o Haaji K Sulyman, K Naresh Kamath S/o K Prabhakar kamath, Hussen S/o Shek Ahamad, Sri. Sujnanendra Theertha Swamiji Puttige Mutt Udupi, Ramakrishna Nayak, Gopal Sherigar, U Gopal, Nagesh A Devadiga, Pandurnaga A Devadiga, Balakrishna A Devadiga, Shashikala K Devadiga, Anuradha Sudir Devadiga, Pushpa Sherigarthi W/o Late Vittal Sherigar, Poornima D/o Late Vittal Sherigar, Praveena S/o Late Vittal Sherigar, Vasanthi Serigarthi D/o Late Bogra Sherigar, Sadashiva Sherigar S/o Late Bogra Sherigar, Yashoda Serigarthi D/o Late Bogra Serigar, Suresh Serigar S/o Late Bogra Serigar, Sathish Serigar S/o Late Bogra Serigar, Prakash serigar S/o Late Bogra Serigar, Rajesh Serigar S/o Late Bogra Serigar, Munira Baanu W/o Basheer Ahamad, Saifulla S/o Usman Sharif, Seethamma W/o Ramakrishna Nayak, Narayana S/o Ramakrishna Nayak, Vasudeva S/o Ramakrishna Nayak, Tulsi D/o Ramakrishna Nayak, Premavathi W/o Sadananda, Sharada D/o Ramakrishna Nayak, Padmavathi W/o Late Panduranga Nayak, Pavitha D/o Late Panduranga Nayak, Ananthapadmanabha S/o Late Panduranga Nayak, Vijayalakshmi D/o Ramakrishna Nayak.
135	18/2A2	Private	Wet	0.0111	Umesh S Shetty S/o Sundara Shetty
136	53/1	Private	NAK	0.0374	Managing Director & amp SYNDICATE FORMERS SERVICES CO OPERATIVE SOCIETY (L) HIRIYADKA
137	66/11	Private	Garden	0.0253	Leelavathi S Mallya W/o Late H Shridhar Mallya, Sugandhi, Prabhakar Mallya, Vasumathi, Vidya, Mamatha, Venkatesh Mallya, Kanthi, Shyamaprasad Mallya, Gulabi Serigarthi, Veerabhdra Devare Hiriyadka, H Srinivas Rao S/o Manjunath Rao
138	66/2	Private	Dry	0.0192	Sri Veerbhadra Devaru Hiriyadka, Sulochana R Hegde W/o Rathnakar Hegde, H Dhrmaprakash S/o H K Ananthaiah, Umavathi Heggdthi W/o Ramakrishna Shetty
139	66/3	Government	Karabhu	0.004	Government
140	66/37	Private	Garden	0.001	Sandya P Rao D/o Umesh Rao
141	66/38	Private	Garden	0.004	Narahari Acharya
142	66/4	Private	Dry	0.0121	P Srinivas Hegde, K Rajaram Hegde S/o Late Sarvani Hegde, K Natraj Hegde S/o Late Sarvani hegde, Niveditha D/o Late Sarvani Hegde
143	66/6A	Private	Garden	0.0051	Sachidanada Acharya
144	66/6B	Private	Garden	0.0081	Sharada H W/o Late P Raghvendra Acharya, H Prabhakar Acharya S/o P Raghavendra Acharya, H Shashidhar Achary S/o P Raghavendra Acharya, Saroja D/o P Raghavendra Acharya
Village: Athradi					
145	22/2C1	Private	Garden	0.0081	Gopalkrishna Nayak S/o Subbanna Nayak, Madaga
146	22/2C2	Private	Garden	0.0071	Lakshman Nayak S/o Subbanna Nayak, Devendra Nayak S/o Lakshman Nayak, Ravindra Nayak S/o Lakshman Nayak
147	22/2C3	Private	Garden	0.0051	Balakrishna Nayak S/o Subbanna Nayak, Madaga
148	22/2E	Private	Garden	0.0202	V. Narayana Holla S/o V. Rama Holla, Shashikala Hegde, Sridhar Hegde
149	22/2F1	Private	Garden	0.0081	Lakshman Nayak S/o Subbanna Nayak
150	22/2F2	Private	Garden	0.0061	Gopalkrishna Nayak S/o Subbanna Nayak
151	22/2F3	Private	Garden	0.0061	Balakrishna Nayak S/o Subbanna Nayak, Madaga
152	22/6	Private	Garden	0.0081	Sakharam Nayak S/o Late Mukunda Nayak, Sridevi Nayak W/o Sakharam Nayak
153	23/14	Private	Garden	0.0172	A Devaraj Nayak S/o Manjunath Nayak, Other Intrested Party Sri Durgaparameshwari Credit Cooperative Society, Parkala Udupi
154	23/1D1	Private	Garden	0.0151	Kutty Shetty, Sanjeeva Shetty, Shashiprabha Shetty W/o Tharanath Shetty, Srimathi Jayanthi D/o Sanjeeva Shetty, Parkash Gopal Shetty S/o Gopal Shetty
155	23/1D2	Private	Garden	0.0122	Shakunthala W/o Raghav C. H
156	23/1D4	Private	Garden	0.0081	Sahira Baanu Late Papamma
157	23/1D5	Private	Garden	0.0122	Mohamad Thouhid S/o Shek Usoof
158	23/1D7	Private	Garden	0.0122	H Sathayanaraya S/o Late V Hanumatha Rao
				Total	**2.2662**

[F. No. RW/BN/KNT/NH-169A/3D]

SHAIKH AMINKHAN, Director

ENFORCED CALM Armed rivalries continue to shape daily security inside the enclave

Gaza security contest shifts after Trump-brokered ceasefire

AGENCIES

The October 10 ceasefire announced by US President Donald Trump has slowed the tempo of fighting in Gaza, but it has not resolved the security contest inside the enclave, where Hamas is moving to reassert authority amid continued Israeli military pressure and tensions with rival armed groups.

The truce brought an end to sustained Israeli air strikes and ground operations that had reduced much of Gaza to rubble. Yet even weeks later, violence has not disappeared. Instead, it has shifted into a lower-intensity struggle defined by sporadic shootings, targeted Israeli actions and an internal effort by Hamas to restore control over a battered territory.

Following the partial withdrawal of Israel, Hamas has redeployed its security apparatus across Gaza City, Khan Younis and central areas of the strip. Armed personnel have reappeared at intersections, markets and aid distribution points, enforcing curfews in some districts and confiscating weapons from unauthorised groups.

Hamas officials say the measures are intended to prevent chaos, looting and attacks that could provoke renewed Israeli operations. Security patrols have been tasked with deterring gangs that expanded during the war, as well as suppressing rival factions. Residents say the presence of Hamas security has reduced street crime in some neighbourhoods, but fear remains widespread. Arrests have been reported, and gunfire has accompanied confrontations between Hamas units and local gunmen, particularly in districts where homes and police facilities were destroyed during the fighting.

Hamas's authority, while visible, is not absolute. Smaller militant factions, including Islamic Jihad cells and armed family-based groups, continue to operate. Some accuse Hamas of compromising with Israel under US pressure, while others resist attempts to fold their fighters into a unified command structure.

Israel has made clear that the ceasefire does not represent an end to its campaign against Hamas. Israeli officials say their forces retain freedom to act against what they describe as "imminent threats", including militants approaching border areas or attempting to rebuild weapons stockpiles. Israeli strikes and raids have continued at a limited level, often described by the military as preventive or defensive. Hamas has accused Israel of exploiting ambiguities in the ceasefire terms, while Israeli officials argue that Hamas violations — including the planting of explosives and the movement of armed fighters — justify continued action.

Hamas militants secure an area after the October 10 ceasefire in Gaza City. AFP FILE

Civilian life

For the civilian population, the ceasefire has brought respite from constant bombardment but little sense of safety. Aid deliveries have increased, yet damaged roads, fuel shortages and bureaucratic obstacles continue to limit distribution. Many families remain displaced, sheltering in tents or the ruins of former homes. Unexploded ordnance poses a daily risk, while Israeli military activity near certain areas has kept residents from returning to farmland or border-adjacent neighbourhoods.

Security incidents involving civilians continue to be reported. Palestinians describe shootings near restricted zones, while Israel says its forces act only when approached by suspects. Aid agencies warn that the security environment remains unpredictable, complicating relief operations.

Trump's role in securing the ceasefire reflects a transactional approach that prioritised stopping the fighting over resolving the underlying conflict. US officials involved in the talks said Washington pressed Israel to pause major operations while signalling to Hamas, through intermediaries, that restraint was expected in return. Crucially, the ceasefire left Hamas in charge of internal security in Gaza, a reality acknowledged quietly by US officials as the least disruptive option. No timeline has been set for Gaza's long-term governance, the future of Hamas's armed wing or broader political arrangements, leaving the ceasefire narrowly focused on security rather than settlement.

Internal rivalries

Beyond Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Gaza's security landscape includes loosely organised armed groups and criminal networks that emerged during the war. Some have attempted to seize aid, control neighbourhoods or challenge Hamas's authority.

Hamas has launched operations to dismantle these networks, but analysts say the group faces constraints. Its infrastructure has been heavily damaged, many experienced fighters have been killed, and public resentment has grown amid the destruction. While the ceasefire has reduced the scale of violence, it has not addressed the core drivers of insecurity. Hamas seeks to survive and retain control. Israel aims to prevent the group from rebuilding. Civilians remain trapped between competing armed actors and external pressure.

Trump has indicated that further US involvement will depend on compliance and regional support, not on pursuing a comprehensive peace initiative. For now, Washington's priority appears to be preventing escalation. As a result, Gaza exists in a state of managed confrontation: guns lowered but not abandoned, authority enforced but contested, and a ceasefire sustained less by trust than by calculation.

Russia pummels Kyiv ahead of Zelenskyy's US visit

Drone and missile barrage hit power supplies

KYIV, AFP

Russia pummelled Ukraine's capital with drones and missiles on Saturday as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy headed to the US to meet President Donald Trump.

Zelenskyy said the attack showed Russia did not want to end its invasion, launched in February 2022, that has left tens of thousands dead.

Ahead of Zelenskyy's talks in Florida with Trump on Sunday, Russia said Kyiv and its EU backers were trying to "torpedo" a previous US-brokered plan to halt the fighting.

The barrage of drones and missiles killed one woman, wounded dozens and cut power and heating to hundreds of thousands of residents in the Kyiv region during freezing temperatures, Ukrainian authorities said.

Zelenskyy said around 500 drones and 40 missiles had struck the capital and its surrounding region.

A drone hits an apartment building during a Russian missile and drone strike in Kyiv on Saturday. REUTERS

"Russian representatives engage in lengthy talks, but in reality, Kinzhals (missiles) and Shaheds (drones) speak for them," he said.

"They do not want to end the war and seek to use every opportunity to cause Ukraine even greater suffering," he added.

Just as Zelenskyy departed for the US, Ukraine's anti-corruption agency announced a new probe, saying some MPs were implicated. It attempted to raid parliamentary offices but was blocked by security personnel.

During the Russian onslaught, which lasted about 10 hours, AFP reporters in Kyiv heard loud explosions, some accompanied by bright flashes that turned the sky orange.

The Russian army said it used hypersonic missiles and drones to target infrastructure and energy facilities "used in the interests of the armed forces of Ukraine", as well as military sites.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said the attack left about 600,000 people without power, while authorities said apartment blocks, a university dormitory and a petrol station were among the buildings hit.

Neighbouring Poland, a Nato member, scrambled jets and put air defences on alert during the attack, the Polish military said on social media.

Thailand, Cambodia sign new ceasefire agreement

BANGKOK, AP/PTI

Thailand and Cambodia signed a ceasefire agreement on Saturday to end weeks of fighting along their border over competing territorial claims.

The agreement took effect at noon (0500 GMT) and calls for a halt in military movements and airspace violations for military purposes. Only Thailand has carried out airstrikes, hitting sites in Cambodia as recently as Saturday morning, according to the Cambodian Defence Ministry.

The deal also calls for Thailand, after the ceasefire has held for 72 hours, to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers it has held as prisoners since earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side.

The agreement was signed by the countries' defence ministers, Cambodia's Tea Seiha and Thailand's Nattaphon Narkphanit, at a border checkpoint. It followed three days of lower-level talks by military officials.

It declares that the sides are committed to an earlier ceasefire that ended five days of fighting in July and follow-up agreements.

The original July ceasefire was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through by US President Donald Trump, who threatened to impose tariffs on the two nations. It was formalised in more detail in October at a regional meeting in Malaysia that Trump attended.

Despite those deals, the countries carried on a bitter propaganda war, and minor cross-border violence continued, escalating in early December to widespread heavy fighting.

BORDER CONFLICT

- The conflict had spread to nearly every border province on both sides, shattering an earlier truce for which US President Donald Trump took credit.
- 47 people were killed and more than a million displaced in three weeks of fighting with artillery, tanks, drones and jets.

US strikes hit IS and Lakurawa jihadists, says Nigeria

ABUJA, AFP: US strikes in Nigeria this week targeted Islamic State militants from the Sahel who were in the country to work with the Lakurawa jihadist group and "bandit" gangs, a spokesman for the Nigerian president told AFP Saturday.

The exact targets of the strikes, launched overnight Thursday into Friday, had been unclear.

Washington and Abuja previously said they targeted IS-linked militants, without providing details on which of Nigeria's myriad armed groups were attacked.

"ISIS, Lakurawa and bandits were targeted," Daniel Bwala, a spokesman for President Bola Tinubu, told AFP on Saturday.

"ISIS found their way through the Sahel to go and assist the Lakurawa and the bandits with supplies and with training," he said.

The Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) group is active in neighbouring Niger, as well as Burkina Faso and Mali, where it is fighting a bloody insurgency against the governments of those countries.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

People walk with their dog in the snow in Central Park in New York City on Saturday. AFP

Snowstorm grounds over 14,400 flights across US Northeast

▸ A mix of snow and ice bore down on the US Northeast early on Saturday, disrupting post-holiday weekend airline traffic and forcing the cancellation or delay of more than 14,400 domestic flights, while prompting officials in New York and New Jersey to issue weather emergency declarations, even as the storm ebbed by mid-morning, Reuters reports from New York.

People across much of the Northeast were advised to stay off the roads because of treacherous conditions, with states of emergency declared in New York and New Jersey. "The safety of New Yorkers is my top priority, and I continue to urge extreme caution throughout the duration of this storm," New York Governor Kathy Hochul said in a statement. By early Saturday, about six to 10 inches (15 to 25 centimetres) of snow had fallen across areas from Syracuse in central New York to Long Island in the southeast of the state, as well as parts of Connecticut, said Bob Oravec, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center near Washington, DC. New York City received two to four inches of snow overnight, with 4.3 inches reported at Central Park, Oravec said — the highest total since 2022. "The good news is that the heaviest snow is done," he said.

Myanmar goes to the polls today

▸ Myanmar heads to the polls on Sunday as it battles a civil war that has ravaged parts of the country as well as one of Asia's worst humanitarian crises, Reuters reports.

Already one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, Myanmar has been hammered by a conflict triggered by a 2021 coup in which the military ousted an elected civilian government led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Myanmar's humanitarian crisis is one of the most severe in Asia, driven by the intensifying civil war and repeated natural disasters, including a massive earthquake in March. The ruling junta has previously suppressed information about a severe food crisis gripping the country by pressuring researchers not to collect data about hunger.

A woman donates money to nuns leaving Uppatasanti Pagoda, a day before Myanmar's general election, in Naypyidaw on Saturday. AFP

Lankan police detain Tamil politician

▸ A Sri Lankan Tamil politician and an ex-minister has been detained for questioning by the police after a weapon issued to him was found in possession of a criminal, PTI reports from Colombo.

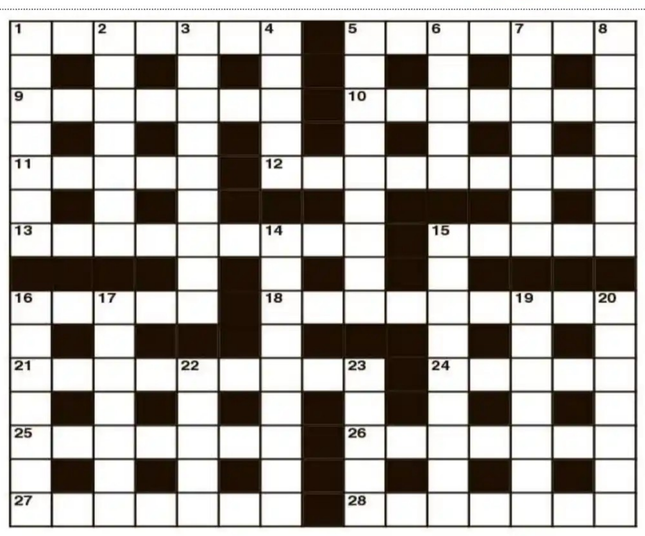
Douglas Devananda, who has been declared a proclaimed offender by a Chennai court in 1996 in the case relating to a shootout at Choolaimedu in 1986, was detained by the crime investigation department of police on Friday through a court order, police said. He was detained for questioning after a firearm officially issued to him was found in the possession of a noted underworld figure. The criminal was extradited from Dubai in 2020 and was later killed in a shootout with the police. Devananda, an ex-Tamil militant and the leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party has held many ministerial positions from 1994 until 2024.

15 injured in Japan knife attack

▸ A man was arrested after stabbing eight people and injuring seven others with what was believed to be bleach at a tyre factory in central Japan on Friday, officials said. There was no immediate explanation of his motive, AP/PTI reports from Tokyo.

Eight people were taken to hospitals after being stabbed by the man with a knife at a factory of the tire-maker Yokohama Rubber Co in the city of Mishima, in the Shizuoka prefecture, west of Tokyo, according to the Fujisan Nanto Fire Department.

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2660 ◆



ACROSS

1 A defence (7)
5 Severe in self-discipline (7)
9 Regain good health (7)
10 Last part (4,3)
11 To flood (5)
12 A surprising revelation (3-6)
13 Medieval Venetian explorer (5,4)
15 Evergreen shrub (5)
16 Comical (5)
18 Ignite (3,6)
21 Without thinking (3,2,4)
24 Wind spirally (5)
25 Spring back (7)
26 Account for (7)
27 Nutritional (7)
28 Diffidence (7)

DOWN

1 Tedium (7)
2 Help in time of need (7)
3 Itemised list of stock (9)
4 Coolness in danger (5)
5 As the greatest amount (2,3,4)
6 Use meagre amount of (5)
7 Essentially unchanging (7)
8 Bordering on old age (7)
14 Ready for duty if needed (2,5-2)
15 Unpleasant consequences (4,2,3)
16 Baffled (7)
17 Striking (7)
19 Make a face (7)
20 Lockjaw (7)
22 Region's animal life (5)
23 Clothe (5)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4020

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 9, Over-state 10, On I'm-pulse 12, Late 13, Es-c-ort 14, Arrange (a range) 15, Con's-table 17, Ab-staine-r 18, Pas-sage 19, But-ton 20, Flat 23, Chiming in 25, Pre-served 26, E-we-R 27, Star-E-d 29, Doubles 32, Scrap yard 34, Ins-ince-re 35, Diviner 36, Report 37, (man)Aged 38, Fore-casts 39, Substance.

DOWN: 1, Fool's-cap 2, Letting slide 3, Passable 4, R-emot-e 5, Cont-R-act 6, Final score 7, Sp-Art-an 8, Pen-etrated 11, L-inen 16, T-ragic 19, Ban (rev) 21, Level pegging 22, Return 23, Cheesed off 24, Gets a-cross 25, Pad 28, Red cross 29, Des-crib-e 30, S-PE-edier 31, Sp-in-ach 33, River 34, Im-p-ose.

EASY

ACROSS: 9, Overthrow 10, Inoculate 12, Pods 13, Stance 14, Explode 15, Reinforce 17, Inanimate 18, Letdown 19, Seethe 20, Beta 23, Exemplify 25, Chronicle 26, Easy 27, Scales 29, Logical 32, Yachtsman 34, Endeavour 35, Optimal 36, Limpid 37, Weak 38, Respected 39, Nighttime.

DOWN: 1, Corporal 2, Headmistress 3, Brethren 4, Twinge 5, Likewise 6, Forefather 7, Culprit 8, Decelerate 11, Aroma 16, Floppy 19, Sty 21, Encyclopedia 22, Enigma 23, Emery board 24, Incomplete 25, Cos 28, Landlady 29, Lodgings 30, Lorikeet 31, Stammer 33, Cites 34, Ermine.

SU DO KU X - 3779

	9					4		
6						7		
								5
								6
		6				9	2	
1	5		7			3		
7	4							
5	2					1		
		9		8				

SOLUTION TO 3778

9	7	5	1	6	8	3	4	2
1	4	8	3	7	2	5	9	6
2	3	6	9	5	4	8	1	7
4	5	1	8	2	6	9	7	3
8	9	7	4	3	1	6	2	5
3	6	2	5	9	7	1	8	4
5	8	4	7	1	3	2	6	9
6	1	3	2	4	9	7	5	8
7	2	9	6	8	5	4	3	1

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

TESTING TROUBLES India's AAFs are down significantly in 2025, but more efforts are needed to eradicate substance abuse

Olympic dream, DOPING REALITY

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

India's ambitious bid to host the 2036 Olympics is very much in motion, with serious efforts underway to project Ahmedabad as a city capable of staging the quadrennial spectacle. The competition is stiff, with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey also circling and yet India landing the 2030 Commonwealth Games, an event that struggled to find hosts, signals how determined it is to push its sporting credentials.

That momentum, however, took a hit in mid-Decmeber when the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) dropped an uncomfortable truth. In its annual report, the global watchdog named India the worst offender among major nations for the third straight year in a classification covering countries that collected over 5,000 or more blood and urine samples in 2024.

India collected a total of 7,333 samples, including 318 blood samples for biological passports used for elite athletes. From these, 3.65 per cent or 260 adverse analytical findings (AAF) or positive results emerged. Track and field topped the list with 76 positives, followed by wrestling with 43 and weightlifting with 29, all Olympic disciplines. The comparison with other sporting heavyweights only deepens the worry.

Germany, infamous for systematic doping during the Cold War era, collected more than 45,000 samples yet reported an AAF rate of just 0.61 per cent, translating to under 200 cases. Neighbouring China tested over 21,000 samples and returned a meagre 0.21 per cent positive rate.

These findings also arrive at a sensitive moment as the International Olympic Committee in July warned the Indian Olympic Association to address doping concerns, along with internal governance issues, if India wanted to remain a serious bidder for the Games.

India's doping offences have come down significantly according to preliminary data for 2025, but with the country pushing hard to host the 2036 Olympics, it needs to do much more to control the menace for it to be considered a serious contender. AFP

Aware that the report could come back to haunt them, the National Anti-Doing Agency (NADA) moved quickly as it presented that India's ranking does not reflect surge in doping culture but rather a system that is catching more offenders who earlier slipped through.

In its statement to WADA's findings, NADA stressed that the 2024 ranking was a by-product of intensified testing, broader surveillance and sharper detection methods. NADA pointed that both in-competition and out-of-competition testing have expanded significantly as tests rose from 4,004 in 2019 to 7,113 in 2024. By mid-December this year, 7,068 tests had already been conducted, with 110 positives so far, bringing the rate down to around 1.5 per cent.

Among the measures pushed by NADA, the Sports Ministry and the Sports Authority of India (SAI) are the promotion of the 'Know Your Medicine' mobile application. The app, which has a mere 10,000-plus downloads on android platforms, allows athletes and support staff to check whether prescribed drugs or supplements contain banned substances.

"NADA has undertaken extensive nationwide education efforts to promote clean sport," the agency said in its report. "In 2024, around 280 anti-doping workshops were conducted during sports events and training camps, reaching approximately 37,000 participants.

"By December 16, 2025, 329 awareness programmes were held, including webinars, seminars, TV sessions, ADEL courses, mega events, engaging competitions and digital campaigns to engage a wider audience."

But the optimism did not last long as WADA's separate report on anti-doping rule violations for 2024, released last week, showed India overtaking long-time leader Russia to become the world's top violator for the first time, with 222 cases; confirming that India are now the lynchpin of the doping world.

The reason, many believe, is that doping in India is not just restricted to elite levels as the roots run deep into the grassroots. Several minors tested positive in 2025 for anabolic androgenic steroids, substances that are often harder to detect and directs at a systemic issue.

"Everyone (athletes) is aware but nobody will speak of it," said a former national-level athlete, speaking to *DH* on the conditions of anonymity. "Such drugs are easily accessible if someone looks for it, even at a local pharmacy without prescription. In some cases, even coaches or senior athletes provide it."

One of the most striking cases this year involved Haryana teenager Sanjana Singh and her coach Sandeep Mann in Novemver. The 18-year-old tested positive for anabolic steroids -- metandienone and oxandrolone -- in two separate tests after her double gold at the South Asian Athletics Championships in Ranchi in October.

While the quantum of Sanjana's punishment is still pending before NADA's Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel, Mann was charged with "Trafficking or Attempted Trafficking of Prohibited Substances". It became one of those rare cases where both athlete and coach were suspended.

When contacted by *DH*, Mann claimed he was unfairly dragged into the controversy. He alleged that he was targeted because his athlete succeeded, while others freely sell banned substances without scrutiny.

His defence may sound predictable but it again points to how widespread and normalised the problem has become. The reality is that performance-enhancing drugs are not used only to chase medals at international events as many athletes use them to gain an edge at departmental competitions like Inter-Railway or Services Games where strong performances can mean promotions and job security.

These events often escape strict monitoring because NADA, operating on a modest budget of 24.30 crore for the 2025-26 fiscal year, cannot adequately staff every competition. In previous years, the allocation hovered around 22 crore and could not be enough to cover testing, education and administration across a massive sporting ecosystem.

Concerns grow further at smaller nationals, state and university-level meets -- barring Khelo India events -- where testing presence is minimal or absent with each test costing up to Rs 25,000 at the National Dope Testing Laboratory in New Delhi.

An interesting pattern emerged at the Khelo India University Games in Jaipur last month. Several athletes, who had qualified through University Nationals, chose not to start in several track and field events. Call it coincidence but NADA was present at the event.

Experts believe the core issue is a mix of poor awareness and weak education, especially among young athletes chasing quick success. There is also limited academic study into how and why doping spreads at lower levels, leaving administrators to react rather than prevent.

"The obvious but unanswered question is did these athletes actually enhance their sporting performance," asked Dr PSM Chandran, former Director of Sports Medicine at SAI. "Let NADA and the National Sports Federations publish transparent analyses of athletes' performances before, during and after the period of alleged doping. Without such evidence, the claim that banned substances universally enhance performance remains belief, not science."

What also remains unresolved is the slow handling of cases. Several athletes provisionally suspended last year are still awaiting final verdicts, raising questions about NADA's efficiency. Indian athletes are obligated under anti-doping rules to report suspicious approaches but when systems move slowly trust erodes just as fast as credibility.

Tilottama Sen (centre)

Tilottama wins 50m rifle 3P gold

BHOPAL, PTI: Teenage Bengaluru shooter Tilottama Sen gave a composed performance to win the women's 50m rifle 3-Positions gold at the National Shooting Championships, here on Saturday.

The 17-year-old, who was the youngest Indian shooter to secure a Paris Olympics quota place for the country, took the top podium spot with a score of 466.9.

Kerala's Vidarsa K Vinod secured the silver medal with 462.9, finishing four points adrift, while Railways' rifle stalwart Ayonika Paul completed the podium with the bronze after scoring 451.8.

Earlier, Tilottama had topped the qualification round with 591, underscoring her consistency across standing, kneeling and prone positions.

Vidarsa followed closely in second place with 589, while Tilottama's Karnataka statemate Anushka Thokur finished third in qualification with 588.

In the final, Anushka narrowly missed out on a medal, finishing fourth with 441.2. Ayushi Podder was placed fifth with 430.6, followed by Ashi Chouksey, who finished with 430.6 after qualifying with a score of 585.

Shriyanka Sadangi (403.9 in final and 585 in qualification) and Ramita (403.8, 586) rounded off the final lineup.

In junior women's 50m rifle 3P, Army's Rituparna Deshmukh came up with a controlled performance in the final to claim gold with 458.6. She rose from fourth position in qualification, where she shot 584, to peak in the final. Nischal mounted a strong challenge but finished just 0.5 points behind.

FOOTBALL PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal answer Man City

Gunners post narrow win to take back top spot; United edge Newcastle 1-0

NOTTINGHAM (UK), AFP

Arsenal responded to the pressure applied by Manchester City by beating Brighton 2-1 to retake top spot in the Premier League after Rayan Cherki inspired Pep Guardiola's side to victory at Nottingham Forest.

Florian Wirtz scored his first Liverpool goal as the Reds beat Wolves 2-1 on an emotional occasion at Anfield as Diogo Jota's former clubs met for the first time since his death.

City's 2-1 win in the lunchtime kick-off at the City Ground took them top for a couple of hours.

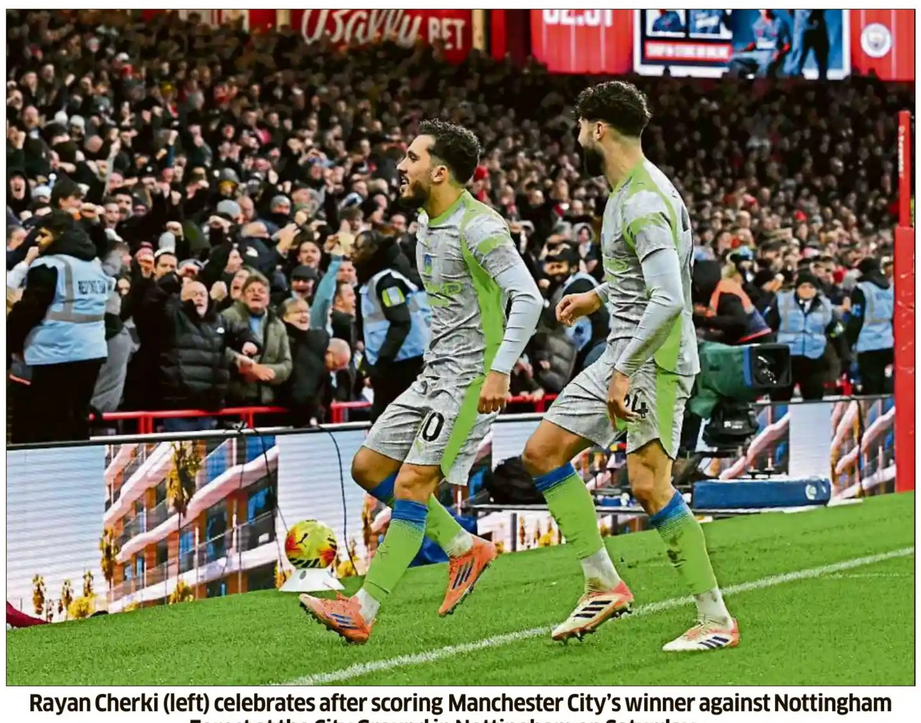
However, Arsenal hit straight back despite making life difficult for themselves against inferior opposition once more.

The Gunners have been guilty of not killing games off in recent weeks in narrow wins over Wolves and Everton before sneaking past Crystal Palace on penalties in the League Cup quarter-finals in midweek.

Martin Odegaard's fine strike was all the home side had to show for their first-half domination at the Emirates.

Mikel Arteta's men had some fortune for the vital second goal when Georginio Rutter turned Declan Rice's corner into his own net. But Arsenal nerves were frayed after Diego Gomez pulled a goal back.

David Raya produced a stunning save to deny Yankuba Minteh as Arsenal held on to win by a solitary goal for the seventh time in their 13 league victories this season.



Rayan Cherki (left) celebrates after scoring Manchester City's winner against Nottingham Forest at the City Ground in Nottingham on Saturday. AFP

In-form Cherki

City were also pushed all the way for an eighth consecutive win as Forest belied their position just above the relegation zone.

But the in-form Cherki produced two moments of magic to keep Guardiola's men right on Arsenal's tails.

The Frenchman teed up Tijjani Reijnders to open the scoring early in the second half.

Omari Hutchinson finished off a fine team move to bring Forest level almost immediately. Cherki, though, drilled in Josko Gvardiol's knock down on 83 minutes.

Third-placed Aston Villa's title credentials face a stern test later when they travel to Chelsea.

Tribute to Jota

Two of Jota's three children and other family members were mascots at Anfield as part of a series of tributes to the Portugal international, who was killed in a car crash in July. On the field, both teams have suffered since but Liverpool continued their turnaround in fortunes to climb into the top four.

Ryan Gravenberch slammed home the opening goal before Wirtz finally struck for the first time since his £100 million ($135 million) move from Bayer Leverkusen.

Liverpool are now unbeaten in seven games.

Results: Arsenal: 2 (Odegaard 14th, Rutter 52nd og) bt Brighton: 1 (Gomez 64th); Brentford: 4 (Schade 7th, 51st, 90+6th, Petrovic 39th og) bt Bournemouth: 1 (Semenyo 75th); Burnley: 0 drew with Everton: 0; Liverpool: 2 (Gravenberch 41st, Wirtz 42nd) bt Wolves: 1 (Bueno 52nd); Nottingham Forest: 1 (Hutchinson 54th) lt to Manchester City: 2 (Reijnders 48th, Cherki 83rd); West Ham: 0 lt to Fulham: 1 (Jimenez 85th).

Surya, Tanvi set up marquee clash

Rithvik, Raghav battle hard to reach men's final

VIJAYAWADA, PTI

Surya Charishma Tamiri will take on Tanvi Patri in the women's singles, whereas Rithvik Sanjeevi set up a summit clash against Bharat Raghav in the National Badminton Championships, here on Saturday.

Surya, who had earlier defeated top seed Unnati Hooda in the quarterfinals, got the better of the world No 45 Rakshita Sree R 21-18 18-21 21-9.

Tanvi bounced back from one game down to record an 18-21, 21-12, 21-15 triumph over Maharashtra's Shruti Mundada for her first-ever appearance in the senior's final.

In the men's singles semifinals, the 2024 Odisha Masters winner Rithvik Sanjeevi S saved a match point before upsetting top seed Kiran George 21-16, 17-21, 22-20 in an hour and eight minutes.

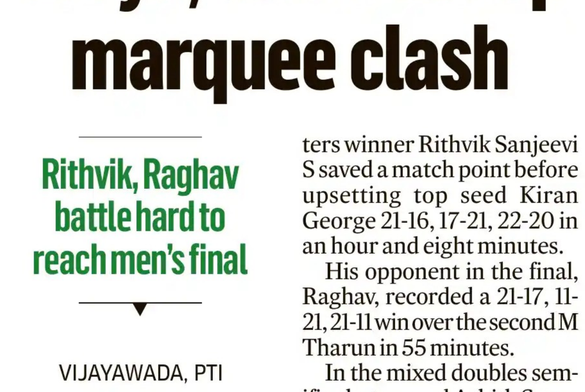
His opponent in the final, Raghav, recorded a 21-17, 11-21, 21-11 win over the second M Tharun in 55 minutes.

In the mixed doubles semifinals, top seed Ashith Surya and Amrutha P fought back after an early setback to defeat third seeds Deep Rambhiya and Sonali Mirkhelkar 8-21, 21-18, 21-18.

The second seeded pair of Sathwik Reddy K and Radhika Sharma beat Nitin Kumar and Kanika Kanwal 21-13, 21-15.

Former national champions Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat K will meet Priya Devi Konjengban and Shruti Mishra in the women's doubles final.

The pair of Shikha and Ashwini beat Vennala K and Reshika U 21-11, 21-15, while Priya Devi and Shruti got the better of Aparna Balan and Simran Singh 21-19, 21-14.



Men's top seed Kiran George lost to Rithvik Sanjeevi 21-16, 17-21, 22-20 in semifinals of the National Badminton Championships in Vijayawada on Saturday. BAI

Hemanth Muddappa

Bengaluru's Muddappa blazes to a double

CHENNAI, PTI: Bengaluru's Hemanth Muddappa strengthened his grip on the title race with two victories and a podium finish in the third and penultimate round of the Mmsc Fmsci Indian National Motorcycle Drag Racing Championship here on Saturday.

Riding for Mantra Racing, Muddappa stormed to victory in the Unrestricted Super Sport 4-stroke class with 8.269 sec, edging out Hanuman Pawshe of Fast Track Racing India, who clocked 8.301s.

Muddappa also closed the gap with Pawshe as they both are now on 55 championship points each while Alimon Sai Dalvi is on 53.

Muddappa won in the 1051-1650cc category with a timing of 8.542s, ahead of Mujahid Pasha (8.629s) and Alimon Sai Dalvi (8.694s).

Muddappa now has one hand on the trophy as he leads the standings on 75 points ahead of Pasha on 54 and Dalvi on 38 points.

In the 851-1050cc class, Mumbai's Pawshe clocked 8.338s to chalk out a narrow win, piping Muddappa (8.367s). But the 15-time National Drag Champion still leads the title hunt with 68 points, while Pawshe has only 53.

In the girls' class, C2 Racing took the podium with Lapis Lazuli of Nagercoil beating Shanti Chandra of Hyderabad.

In the supporting classes, Bengaluru's Syed Imran of Fast Track Racing India enjoyed a successful outing with two victories and a podium, winning the 361-550cc.

Nikki Pradhan

Royals bank on home support; Soorma eye title run at HIL

RANCHI, PTI

Ranchi Royals will look to bank on the home support to dominate the Women's Hockey India League, while JSW Soorma will have the trophy on their minds after a close slip last season when the four-team competition begins here on Sunday.

The home team is coming into the tournament following some turbulence last season when the inaugural edition winners Odisha Warriors (women's team) became Ranchi Royals after the former withdrew post Season 1 of the competition.

The new Ranchi Royals franchise took over their spot, retaining some key players and the core squad to represent Jharkhand in Season 2, marking a new identity for the team.

The tournament, to be played exclusively at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium here, will follow a double round-robin format, with each team facing the others twice in the league phase, following which the top-two sides will qualify for the final on January 10. Last season, Odisha Warriors defeated JSW Soorma Hockey Club in a closely-fought match to win the title, and the new season should be a highly competitive one given that the performance of players will be closely followed by the national team scouts.

Vandana Katariya

Katariya ready to reverse retirement

NEW DELHI, PTI: Former India women's hockey striker Vandana Katariya on Friday said she decided to quit the game earlier this year after feeling neglected, but she is ready to reverse her decision if the team management wants.

The 33-year-old two-time Olympian announced her retirement from international hockey in April this year, bringing down the curtains on her distinguished career spanning 15 years.

Katariya retired as India's most-capped women's hockey player. She scored 158 goals in 320 international matches after making her debut for India in 2009.

She also said that she was pained by the frequent dropping from the playing side.

"When I felt that they (team management) don't have any expectation from me that was the trigger and it was putting mental pressure on me. I was fit and capable but I was suffering as well so I thought it's the end," Katariya said.

IN BRIEF

PSL teams for Rs 1.3 billion?

▸ The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is seeking to sell each of its two new teams for the next phase of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) at an annual franchise fee of 1.3 billion Pakistani rupees, according to PTI in Karachi.

The PCB, who will host the auction on Jan 8, claims around 12 parties, including five from overseas, have submitted initial bid documents for the two new teams, though it has yet to release the final list of eligible bidders after conducting financial and technical due diligence.

Draper to miss Australian Open

▸ British No. 1 Jack Draper will miss the Australian Open next month as he continues to recover from an arm injury, reports AFP from London.

The world No. 10 has not played since withdrawing at the US Open due to bone bruising in his left arm.

Psychic Star for main event

MUMBAI SELECTIONS

Psychic Star, from the stables of Pesi Shroff and to be ridden by G Vivek, is fancied to win the Maharaja Jiwajirao Scindia Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races to be run over distance of nine furlongs at the races on Sunday.

The first race starts at 1:30 pm.

1. PA D'Avoine Trophy - 1200M: Bee Magical 1, Azure 2, Ashwa Brazil 3.
2. Topspin Plate - 1000M: Elevate 1, Inheritance 2, Family Man 3.
3. Karl Umrigar Salver - 1400M: Christophany 1, Chagall 2, Ataash 3.
4. Lt Col. Govind Singh (VRC) Trophy - 1400M: Buckingham 1, Alexios 2, D'artagnan 3.
5. Dr IC Nagree Trophy - 1200M: Charlie Brown 1, Don Julio 2, Santana Row 3.
6. Maharaja Jiwajirao Scindia Trophy - 1800M: Psychic Star 1, Evaldo 2, African Gold 3.
7. DW Reid Plate - 1600M: Speak The Breed 1, Maratha Admiral 2, Jagger 3.
8. Ram Zodge Plate - 1400M: Zafferano 1, Starseed 2, Foujita 3.
Day's best: Bee Magical. **Jackpot:** 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8. **I treble:** 2, 3, 4. **II treble:** 5, 6 & 7.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

4th Women T20I: India vs Sri Lanka **(7 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network**, **JioHotstar**.

FOOTBALL

EPL: Sunderland vs Leeds United **(7:30 pm)**, Crystal Palace vs Tottenham **(10 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 1**, **JioHotstar**.

HOCKEY

HIL: Ranchi Royals vs SG Pipers **(women, 7 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network**.

ASHES FOURTH TEST

England break 15-year duck in two-day carnage

Visitors chase down 175 to end 18-match winless streak Down Under

MELBOURNE, AFP

A fighting England won their first Test on Australian soil in 15 years on Saturday, restoring their battered pride with a gutsy four-wicket victory to clinch a chaotic fourth Ashes clash that was all over inside two days.

The pumped-up tourists dismissed Australia for 132 soon after lunch in front of a bumper 92,045 crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, following the 20 wickets that tumbled on day one.

It left them chasing 175 to win, with Harry Brook (18) and Jamie Smith (three) seeing them home for the loss of six wickets to huge roars from their travelling "Barmy Army" of fans. Jacob Bethell contributed 40 and Zak Crawley 37.

England crashed in the first three Tests and came to Melbourne under enormous pressure amid questions about their limited preparations and allegations of excessive drinking during a mid-series beach break.

But they finally came good and will head to Sydney for the fifth and final Test brimming with confidence.

England had not won a Test in Australia since January 2011 at Sydney, losing 16 and drawing two since, and openers Crawley and Ben Duckett had a clear objective to snap the streak -- play ultra-aggressive "Bazball" style.

Duckett hit a boundary off Mitchell Starc in his first over while Crawley slammed Michael Neser for a six and a four in successive balls.

They brought up a whirlwind fifty opening partnership but next ball Duckett was bowled by a Starc yorker for 34. Fast bowler Brydon Carse then strode to the middle as a surprise number three in place of Jacob Bethell.

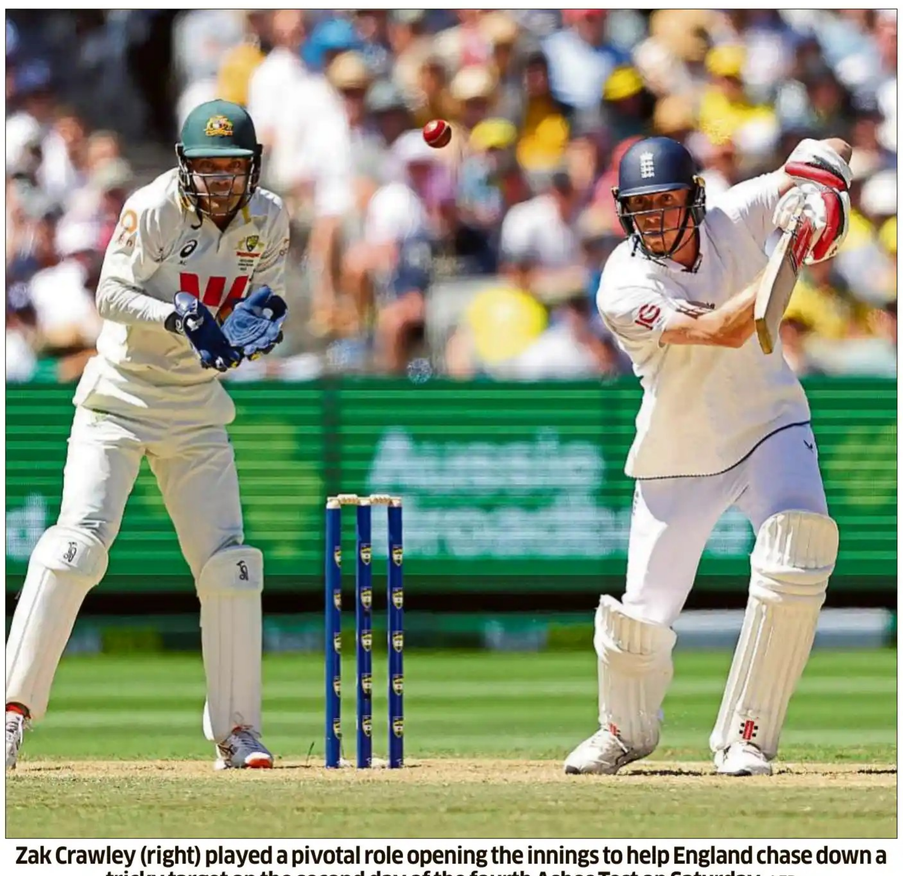
But England's pinch-hitting experiment failed as Carse lasted only eight balls before skying Jhye Richardson to Cameron Green.

Crawley fell lbw to Scott Boland after a gritty knock and Bethell was caught by Usman Khawaja from the same bowler.

Richardson trapped Joe Root (15) leg before wicket and Starc accounted for Ben Stokes (2), but by then only 10 runs were needed and Brook and Smith completed the job.

Australia resumed on 4/0 in their second innings after an explosive opening day of searing pace saw 20 wickets fall with the hosts dismissed for 152 and England just 110.

Brief scores: Australia: 152 & (O/n: 4/0): 132 all out in 34.3 overs (Travis Head 46; Brydon Carse 4-34, Josh Tongue 2-44, Ben Stokes 3-24) lt to England: 110 all out & 178/6 in 32.2 overs (Zak Crawley 37, Ben Duckett 34, Jacob Bethell 40; Mitchell Starc 2-55, Jhye Richardson 2-22, Scott Boland 2-29). **Result:** England won by 4 wickets. **Series:** Australia lead 5-match series 3-1. **PoM:** Josh Tongue. **Next match:** Jan 4 (Sydney).



Zak Crawley (right) played a pivotal role opening the innings to help England chase down a tricky target on the second day of the fourth Ashes Test on Saturday. AFP

Shortened games are a disservice to Test cricket

Melbourne or Mumbai, designer pitches reduce contest to farce

MADHU JAWALI
BENGALURU, DHNS

As an astonishing 20 wickets tumbled on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, former England skipper Kevin Pietersen made a pointed observation.

"India ALWAYS gets hammered when wickets fall like crazy on day one of a Test, so I hope that Australia gets the same scrutiny. Fair is fair!" he posted on X on Friday.

A maverick batter during his playing days, Pietersen offered an even more pertinent point on the second day, when Australia were dismissed inside two sessions in their second innings.

"Utter shambles and complete disrespect to the greatest form of the game."

In total, 36 wickets fell and the Test concluded with almost 22 overs remaining on the second day.

If Test cricket were to be compared to Formula One, the pitch would be the car in the ultimate motorsport race. The better the car, the higher the chances of winning, as driving skills become less significant. Likewise, over-prepared or undercooked pitch to aid home team reduces the contest to farce. It becomes a game of luck rather than skill, a disservice to the traditional format that begins to resemble an extended one-day match.

Whether in Mumbai or Melbourne, it is Test cricket that ultimately suffers.

Beyond the financial fallout, the deeper loss is the erosion of Test cricket's true character: a flow of calm passages and chaotic phases, momentum swings created by changing weather or a deteriorating surface and a cat-and-mouse battle where control shifts from one side to the other, making it compelling viewing.

One major reason for the rise in shortened Tests is the structure of the World Test Championship, where the top two teams by points percentage contest the final at the end of a two-year cycle. To stay ahead, home boards often prepare pitches tailored to their bowling strengths, but the strategy can backfire when surfaces offer too much assistance and leave batters on a wing and a prayer as even average bowlers look unplayable.

The numbers reflect the trend. Since the start of the WTC cycle in June 2021 (after the inaugural final between India and New Zealand), 38 Tests have ended in under three days. Seventeen of those came in cycle between the second and third finals. The current cycle, which began with the Australia–West Indies series in June, has already seen seven Tests finish before a fourth day.

The pressure to maximise home advantage is clear, but it carries risk: surfaces that help bowlers too much — whether pace or spin — can level the playing field for touring sides. It happened to India in Kolkata against South Africa last month, and to Australia in Melbourne against England on Saturday.

It's an absolute travesty that a championship that was introduced to provide some context to Test cricket should hurt its cause.

Test cricket is unique because it avoids the monotony of white-ball cricket. Same Kookaburra ball across all countries, little difference in the nature of pitches and the pattern of matches. On the other hand, five-day cricket offers a variety of challenges in different regions: Turn and reverse swing in the sub-continent, conventional swing and seam in England and pace and bounce in Australia test cricketers' ability to adapt and succeed out of their comfort zone. Even the choice of ball – SG in India, Dukes in England, Kookaburra in Australia – adds another layer of complexity to the format.

Home teams are entitled to use familiar conditions to their advantage, but that edge should not be stretched to the point where it strips the soul from Test cricket.

The Boxing Day Test ended with almost 22 overs left on the second day as a staggering 36 wickets fell inside two days. AFP

India look to extend dominance over Lankans

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PTI

Formidable India will be eager to register a dominance-extending fourth victory on the bounce in the fourth Women's T20I against Sri Lanka here on Sunday.

The Harmanpreet Kaur-led team has not even given a chance to its Lankan counterparts to compete in this five-match series, which currently stands 3-0 in favour of the hosts.

It is evident in the fact that India, who chased in all three preceding matches, have not batted more than 14.4 overs, have not lost more than three wickets and have never faced a target in excess of 129.

The primary credit-holders for that overwhelming success are bowlers. Seasoned spinner Deepti Sharma took four wickets across two matches and Renuka Singh equalled that feat in a single match at the Greenfield Stadium here on Friday.

The toss also might have played a small part as Harmanpreet called it right on all three occasions and elected to field, giving her bowlers a chance to operate in conditions with lesser dew.

But the bowlers have maximised that opportunity spectacularly, not allowing any of the Sri Lankan batters to cross an individual 40 so far.

In this series, India also have tried various combinations as well. Arundhati Reddy played the first two matches, while Renuka came in for her pace colleague in the next contest.

"We have been trying different combinations with the (T20) World Cup in mind. We want to keep our standards high after winning the (ODI) World Cup recently. And we want our standard and performance to remain high," said Renuka in the post-match press conference here.

The Indian batters too have backed the bowlers with a crushing show with Shafali Verma and Jemimah Rodrigues leading the parade with a fifty each.

However, star batter Smriti Mandhana is yet to hit the overdrive, making 40 runs in three games at an average of 13.33 at a sub-100 strike rate. The graceful left-hander will be looking for a big outing here that can bring more smiles her way.

It also remains to be seen whether India will blood young batter G Kamalini and experienced Harleen Deol in this match.

SL eye redemption

Led by veteran Chamari Athapaththu, the Lankan batters have failed miserably in the series.

Besides the skipper, the tourists have talents like Hasini Perera, Kavisha Dilhari and Harshitha Samarawickrama. But none of them have been able to produce a defining innings so far, and they would want one now to change the team's fortunes.

Smriti Mandhana will hope to come to the party, having averaged just 13.33 in the T20I series.

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS, 7:00 PM

Indian side was not great in 2-2 home draw: Cook

MELBOURNE, PTI: Batting great Alastair Cook said England's 2-2 home series draw against Shubman Gill-led India was against "not a great Indian side", flagging concerns over the team's preparation for the Ashes, in which they are trailing 1-3.

The five-match series against India ended in a 2-2 draw earlier this year. It was Gill's maiden assignment as Test captain, and the young batter finished the series with a prolific 754 runs, including four centuries.

Cook said England's recent results had masked deeper issues, creating an illusion of progress.

"They started off with a bang, Key, McCullum and Stokes. I think McCullum won his first eight out of 10 games or something the first year. Since then, it's gone downhill," Cook said on the opening day of the ongoing Boxing Day Test at the MCG.

"This year, I think their percentage of wins is like just above 30 per cent, so it's a bit of a downward trend."

Citing the five-Test series against India, Cook said, "... they were talking about India, they lost, they drew India and India just got thumped by South Africa. So that Indian side wasn't a great Indian side either. So actually it's a reality, it's just hit England, and now they're going to decide how they want to play."

It was special to be part of that amazing group: Dhinidhi

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Dhinidhi Desinghu

It was an award ceremony of a different kind for Dhinidhi Desinghu in New Delhi on Friday. The 15-year-old swimmer from Karnataka was one among 20 achievers from different walks of life who were conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on the occasion of Veer Bal Diwas.

"I was amazed to witness so many talented children in our country from various fields," Dhinidhi told *DH*.

"To know that I was part of that group is something really special. There were small kids... As young as seven and nine receiving awards for bravery. It was inspiring and I'm so happy that I got to be a part of it," said the swimming sensation who trains at the Dolphin Aquatics under coach Nihar Ameen here.

While Dhinidhi was in awe of every other awardee at the ceremony, an annual event held on December 26 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the teenager is an achiever in her own right. Bedsides being the youngest member of the Indian contingent both at the Paris Olympics last year and the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou (in China), Dhinidhi has been setting the pool ablaze at every swimming competition in the country for over five years now.

After having lived a sporting career with several highlights already, the road ahead is only expected to get tougher. And Dhinidhi is mindful of this fact. As a busy year ahead awaits, with multiple races to compete in, the teen is ready to chase the ticking clock more intensely.

"Compared to last year, this year was very different in terms of my swimming performance. This year was all about training and focusing on specific competitions. Though the outcome wasn't exactly what we wanted, but my timings have all improved. So I'm very excited about next year."

"Right now I'm in the middle of my 10th exam. So I have my pre-boards starting from January 1 and my board exams from February 17. After that, there are many major international competitions, like the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Youth Olympics. So the goal would be to qualify and make it to the finals," Dhinidhi summed-up.

Mhatre named U-19 WC skipper, Suryavanshi to lead on SA tour

MUMBAI, PTI: Ayush Mhatre was on Saturday named captain of the 15-member Indian side for the U-19 World Cup to be held in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 15 to February 6 next year.

However, along with Vihaan Malhotra, Mhatre will miss the preceding assignment to South Africa -- a three-match ODI series -- due to their respective wrist injuries.

In their absence, batting prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi will captain India on the tour of South Africa where all the three ODIs will be played at Benoni on January 3, 5 and 7. Aaron George will be the vice-captain.

Both Mhatre and Malhotra -- who has been named vice captain for the U19 World Cup -- will report to the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru for further management of their injuries before joining the Indian team. Sooryavanshi and George have also been named in the U19 World Cup team.

"Ayush Mhatre and Vihaan Malhotra have sustained wrist injuries and will miss the South Africa tour," the BCCI said in a statement.

"The duo will report to the BCCI Centre of Excellence for further management of their injuries and will join the team for the ICC Men's Under-19 World Cup," it added.

For South Africa tour: Vaibhav Suryavanshi (C), Aaron George (VC), Vedant Trivedi, Abhigyan Kundu (wk), Harvansh Singh (wk), RS Ambrish, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan A Patel, Mohamed Enaan, Henil Patel, D Deepesh, Kishan Kumar Singh, Udhav Mohan, Yuvraj Gohil, Rahul Kumar.

For U19 World Cup: Ayush Mhatre (c), Vihaan Malhotra (vc), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Aaron George, Vedant Trivedi, Abhigyan Kundu (wk), Harvansh Singh (wk), RS Ambrish, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan A Patel, Mohamed Enaan, Henil Patel, D Deepesh, Kishan Kumar Singh, Udhav Mohan.

Ayush Mhatre

Karnataka shine in SZ aquatics

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka swimmers and water polo teams impressed on the opening day of the South Zone Championships in Chennai on Saturday. Both the men's and women's water polo teams defeated hosts Tamil Nadu comfortably to reach semifinals.

Swimming: Results (winners only):
Boys: Group I (U-17): 1500m freestyle: Renukacharya Hodmani (KAR) 17:28.98; **200m breaststroke:** Saiesh Kini (KAR) 2:30.10; **50m butterfly:** Ishan Das (TEL) 26.44; **200m freestyle:** Sreehari B (KER) 1:59.92; **100m backstroke:** Swaroop Dhanuche (KAR) 1:01.78; **50m breaststroke:** Vishagan Saravanan (KAR) 30.93; **4x100m medley relay:** Karnataka 4:09.88.
Group II (U-14): 400m freestyle: Shreyas Sunil (KAR) 4:29.70; **200m breaststroke:** Abhijith P P (KER) 2:43.42; **50m butterfly:** S Krish (KAR) 28.17; **200m freestyle:** Shreyas Sunil (KAR) 2:07.35; **100m backstroke:** S Krish (KAR) 1:03.74; **50m breaststroke:** Siddhanth B Singh (KAR) 33.48; **4x100m medley relay:** Karnataka 4:24.75.
Girls: Group I (U-17): 1500m freestyle: Adithi Vinayak Relekar (KAR) 19:09.58; **200m breaststroke:** Dakshinya Harini Gidijala (TEL) 2:55.42; **50m butterfly:** Khathija Tul Kubra M M (TN) 30.47; **200m freestyle:** Mihika Dutta (KAR) 2:14.62; **100m backstroke:** Avanthika Pradeep (KER) 1:11.66; **50m breaststroke:** Pavani Sarayu N (AP) 37.28; **4x100m medley relay:** Karnataka 4:52.41.
Group II (U-14): 400m freestyle: Tanvi Gaurav (KAR) 4:57.66; **200m breaststroke:** Alakananda Raju (KER) 2:52.89; **50m butterfly:** Manya R Wadhwa (KAR) 31.06; **200m freestyle:** Shivani Karra (TEL) 2:17.93; **100m backstroke:** Shivani Karra (TEL) 1:10.82; **50m breaststroke:** Alakananda Raju (KER) 36.06; 4x100m medley relay: Karnataka 4:50.42.

Gukesh, Erigaisi stay afloat as Carlsen loses

DOHA, PTI

India's chess ace D Gukesh had said ahead of the FIDE World Rapid Championships that he didn't have a lot of expectations from the season-ending event here. But two days into the competition, the classical world champion proved himself wrong as he remained among the front-runners after nine rounds of the showpiece competition on Sunday.

The teenager was joint seventh on 6.5 points with 12 others, while Russian Grandmaster Vladislav Artemiev, on 7.5 points, emerged as the joint leader with Hans Niemann after inflicting a rare defeat on world No 1 and five-time world rapid champion Magnus Carlsen (seven points), who slipped to joint third with three others.

Arjun Erigaisi

On Saturday, Gukesh's fighting spirit stood out as he, along with Arjun Erigaisi (6.5 points), remained just one point adrift of the leaders even as R Praggnanandhaa dropped to joint 20th along with young Nihal Sarin (both six points).

Gukesh, playing black in the sixth round -- the day's first -- warded off a strong challenge from Anish Giri to split the point after the Dutch Grandmaster seemed to have cornered the Indian's king with a superior rook formation. Gukesh, however, managed a draw in 57 moves.

The Indian was then involved in a stalemate with former European champion Alexey Sarana, before going on to earn a full point against Spaniard David Anton in the penultimate round of the day.

However, the Indian ace suffered his only defeat so far in the competition when he blundered on the 34th move with white to go down to former world rapid champion from Uzbekistan, Nodirbek Abdusattorov.

On a day when giant-killer Artemiev was on the rampage, the 27-year-old defeated Erigaisi in the opening round, with the Indian a pawn and a bishop down.

Artemiev then achieved a rare victory over Carlsen -- the Norwegian's only defeat in the nine rounds so far – as he went top of the table. The last four rounds in the 13-round 'Open' section will take place on Sunday.

SARKARI SECRETS

Tabled numbers and trust deficit: Can we count on official data?

Venkatesh Nayak
wakes up every morning thinking someone somewhere is hiding something

Towards the end of November, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released its annual report on our economic development and policies, appreciating the continued robust growth, despite external headwinds. India is a founding member of this intergovernmental institution, which fosters global monetary cooperation, encourages expansion of trade and economic growth, and discourages policies that, in its opinion, can harm economic prosperity. While reporting on its observations, large parts of our media headlined the 'C' rating of our national accounts data because the IMF perceives it as somewhat hampering surveillance.

On December 4, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman called these media reports misleading. She pointed out that the IMF had given a median rating of 'B' for all other segments of India's statistical assessment. The 'C' rating was primarily on account of India adopting an outdated base year (2011-12) for calculating national statistics. It is being updated to 2022-23, she told Parliament. But she was silent about the IMF's other findings that consolidated fiscal data for the Centre and the states had not been published since mid-2019 and that, in the absence of statistics from local governments and the utilisation of extra-budgetary funds, the picture of government expenditure is not complete.

The quality and quantity of *sarkari* data released in recent years, be it about GDP figures or the unemployment rate or the claims of poverty reduction, have been so severely critiqued by experts and so vehemently defended by the government that citizens like me no longer know what to accept as "the truth". Thankfully, we have the tools to question these claims and counterclaims about official data.

For example, on December 4 itself, the Ministry of Law and Justice tabled in Parliament case pendency figures from national-level tribunals like the NGT, NCLT, NCLAT, TDSAT, ITAT, CESTAT, and administrative tribunals. The Rajya Sabha was told that 6,904 cases are currently pending before the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT). A day later, the Lok Sabha was informed about case disposal and pendency figures for all these tribunals, including the AFT, from 2020 to date.

Earlier in August, I had filed an RTI application with the AFT seeking annual case admission, disposal, and pendency data since its inception. The AFT was set up by an Act of Parliament to adjudicate disputes relating to service matters of personnel employed in the Army, Navy, and the Air Force. The AFT is also an appellate forum to challenge court-martial findings and sentences against defence personnel. In March 2021, Parliament was told, more than two-thirds, i.e., 23 out of 34, of judicial and administrative member positions of the AFT were vacant. Today, one-third (11) of the posts are vacant, according to the data tabled in the Rajya Sabha.

Statistics furnished by AFT's Principal Bench situated in Delhi, covering its own performance and that of the ten regional benches located in various cities across the country, show that the cumulative pendency is 27,692 cases. This is more than three times the figure revealed in Parliament. While the government claimed that 2,460 cases were disposed of in 2020, the AFT revealed only 1,939 cases were disposed of that year. According to the government, the disposal in 2021 was 6,140 cases, but AFT has admitted to only 4,178 cases being disposed of. The government said 6,175 cases were disposed of in 2022 and 9,653 in 2023, but AFT's disposal figures are 5,927 and 9,322, respectively, for those years. For 2024, the government claimed a disposal of 7,706 cases, but the AFT disclosed a higher figure of 7,793 cases.

While commenting on the discrepancy, a few days ago, I had attributed it to careless reporting by a section of the media, which looked only at the last column containing the 2025 figure tabled in the Lok Sabha on December 5. However, the data tabled in the Rajya Sabha a day earlier shows 6,904 as the cumulative pendency.

What does one make of this data discrepancy? We have not yet quizzed the figures claimed for other tribunals. How reliable are they? Obviously, the government sources such data from the tribunals themselves. Where and why discrepancies creep in is a *sarkari* secret. Is this because of negligence or deliberate design? In either scenario, this amounts to misleading Parliament. Sadly, the only remedy that any MP can claim is to file a breach of privilege motion, which a committee will rule upon in its own sweet time. By then, the issue would have lapsed from public memory. Should the government not be made more accountable and in real time?

INSCRUTABLE CHINA

China's year of churn and rise

China should be content with the way it managed to reverse the United States' tariff wars, with Sun Tzu's dictum – "winning without fighting". The year, however, saw hardships for the Chinese people, exacerbated by economic restructuring towards domestic consumption, unemployment, real estate crisis, local debt, and a relative economic decline.

China crossed $1 trillion in trade surplus this year, thanks to high-quality development and trade diversification to Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. This is despite the debilitating 145% tariffs imposed by the US. The US-China truce for easing rare earth metal export restrictions, the purchase of US soybeans in exchange for lowered tariffs, and the supply of advanced chips from the US signified China's stature in the global and regional power structures.

Through summit meetings at Tianjin, the military parade at Beijing, the China-Pacific Island Countries foreign ministerial meeting at Xiamen, and new platforms such as the Global Governance Initiative, China indicated its resolve to "set up a different kitchen" away from West-led political systems. The proposal to set up the SCO Development Bank, upgrading free trade areas, increasing investment in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to $1.3 trillion, and expanding the trade and investment footprint are in line with concerted mercantilist policies aimed at eclipsing the US.

However, China's restrictions on rare earth metal export rattled the global markets, inviting criticism on the weaponisation of trade and inter-dependence. Beijing's move has pushed several countries to seek secure and resilient supplies, besides causing a sharp decline in trust in China. It led to the US forming Pax Silica with Japan, Singapore, South Korea, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Israel, the UAE, and Australia. The European Union passed the Critical Raw Materials Act, while Indian companies are exploring the tapping of an estimated seven million tonnes of rare earth oxides.

Srikanth Kondapalli
The JNU Prof has been Peking behind the Bamboo Curtain for 30 years
@Sri_Kondapalli

For an order-obsessed Beijing, the cancellation of the German foreign minister's visit, citing disagreements on several fronts, was a setback. The relations with Japan nosedived after China's Consul General at Osaka criticised Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's comments on Beijing posing an "existential threat" in Taiwan scenarios. Frequent China-Philippines ship collisions and the use of water cannons took the fizz away from the third draft on a "code of conduct" in the South China Sea dispute.

There was controversy in the arrest of Liu Jianchao, the head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department, on charges of corruption. In 2023, Foreign Minister Qin Gang was dismissed; his whereabouts are unknown.

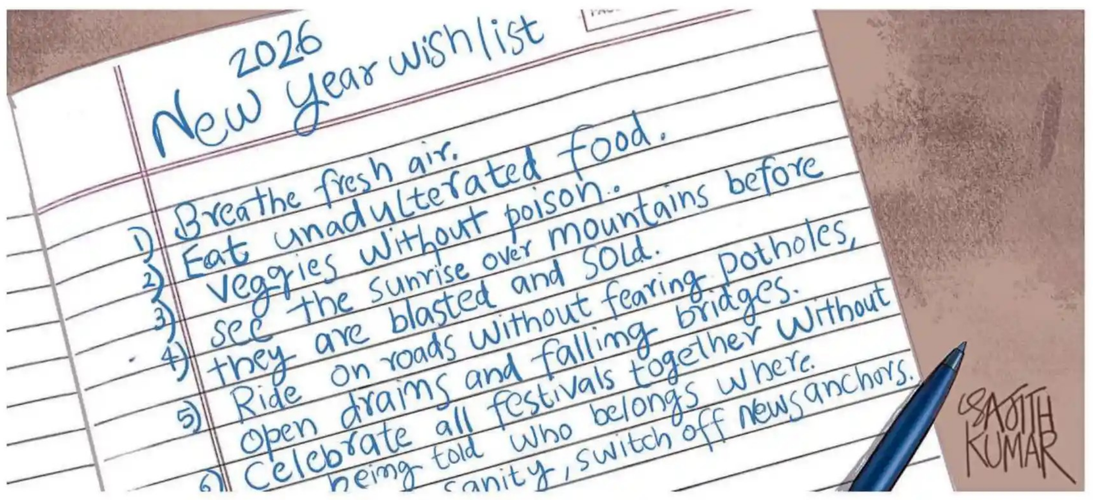
China continued to be the largest trading partner for Africa, with over $295 billion in trade in 2024 and $222 billion in the first eight months of 2025. However, the US tariffs are expected to leave an impact on the volumes. Furthermore, Niger's expulsion of three China National Petroleum Corporation executives in March put in jeopardy the $5-billion investment in the energy pipeline linked to Soraz refinery.

China's footprint in Latin America and the Caribbean expanded through free trade agreements with Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, while the negotiations with Honduras and El Salvador advanced. It released a third white paper on the region that emphasised multipolarity. China became the second-largest trading partner for the region with over $518 billion in trade in 2024. However, with the US renewing its Monroe Doctrine, CK Hutchison, a Hong Kong firm, transferred stakes in 43 ports to US companies. Earlier this year, there was friction over the US' "pressure" that led Panama to quit the BRI.

India and China continued to engage in different formats and forums. At the 24th Special Representatives meeting in August, there was agreement to establish expert and working groups and discuss "delimitation" of the boundary. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tianjin to attend the SCO summit. The atmospherics, however, was marred by the detention of two Indians by Chinese immigration authorities at Shanghai and Guangzhou.

China's balancing act was also reflected in the support it extended to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor in May. Its air force issued a note that no new equipment was transferred during the conflict, but Beijing's "grey zone" tactics did embolden Pakistan. China has also decided to bifurcate the Aksai Chin region into two counties and build multiple dams in the fragile Himalayas.

The 2026 agenda looks packed for China as it navigates differences with the US and countries including Japan, while maintaining the tentative truce on its border with India.


2026
New Year wish list
1) Breathe fresh air.
2) Eat unadulterated food.
3) Veggies without poison.
4) See the sunrise over mountains before they are blasted and sold.
5) Ride on roads without fearing potholes, open drains and falling bridges.
6) Celebrate all festivals together without being told who belongs where.
Sanity, switch off news anchors.
SAJITH KUMAR

OUTSIDE

The collar as a social marker

We can all agree that whatever use a poet might make of a collar, they cannot turn it into a metaphor of the interior. A collar is a thing of the outside – it peeks out of other pieces of clothing, a sweater or jumper, even a shawl or blazer, where it's part of fashion etiquette to remain slightly visible. In that sense, it's a bit like the neck, which has to remain above water or a blanket; in general, uncovered. It must be intuition that guides me to this thought, for it's in the etymology of the word itself, the relationship between collar and neck – the word originated about nine hundred years ago, from 'coler', which derived from the Latin *collare*, meaning a band for the neck, a necklace. *Collum*, to which it is related, means 'neck', which, in turn, means 'to turn', for it's the neck that allows the head to turn.

But one doesn't need a collar to turn one's head the way one needs a zip in the pants or a hole through the sleeves, for body parts to function. In that sense, the collar is like the appendix, almost unnecessary, like a vestigial organ. Why did it become integral to the upper body garment then? I'm thinking of a comparable non-essential thing in garments of the southern half of our body, pants, skirt, saree, *dhoti*, where there is something as inessential as a collar. I can't think of any – the zip, pockets, the loops to hold the belt, even the hemline folded and stitched in to prevent fraying, all of these are necessary. They, and almost everything in the upper garment too – buttons to bring its two halves together, sleeves, and even elbow patches – are necessary for a shirt or top or blouse to hold. What is the collar doing there, serving no purpose, even though it has the odd make-believe form of the rooftop of a lighthouse?

Everything else in the garments we wear is a response to the human anatomical form, moulded by its structure and need to communicate bodily with the world; looseness here, tightness there, annotated by bones and gravity, everything except the collar, which, being the highest peak in anything we wear, besides the head garment, is formed by etiquette, by the relationship with the world, the outside. And because it is outside, it becomes a marker, a passport. Hence, its easy appropriation into the class system – the distinction between blue- and white-collar jobs, the sturdy blue collars of physical labour and the white shirts with collars protected by dirt-free offices of clerks and managers. But this is not a formulation that emerged in the West in the early 20th century.

Long before that, in 17th-century China, the standing collar was used by Qing dynasty officials and noblemen. This would come to be called the 'Mandarin collar' in European and American fashion, and the 'Nehru collar' in India, since it was adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru for the kind of formal and semi-formal jackets he wore. The connection between the collar and the outside remained – as did its association with an unarticulated class system. The aside about it would come to be dropped, to retain its respectability – that the idiom 'holding by the collar' would move from police and legal origin, of holding a suspect by their collar, to 'collar the guest of honour'.

Sumana Roy
is an author and poet. Her books include *How I Became a Tree* and *Provincials*

Collar is, therefore, not the synecdoche of part-for-the-whole, but a signifier. Take the tie or the bow-tie that owes its existence to the collar – without it, they would have no place to hang from. The round-necked tee, from which no tie can hang except like a noose, would come to be seen as something that belonged to sportsmen and the working class. Women could choose to wear blouses with collars if they so wished – the sharp ends would grow into dog ear-shaped collars, often embroidered, sometimes in a contrasting or complementary colour to the rest of the top. But men, poor men, like animals with collars to keep them on a leash. Hilarious it is then, this forged relation between the collar, class, and gender (for women were exempted from this rule), that colonial club protocol would come to demand the collar and the tie as passports for entry.

THE DIGITAL ALARMIST

The tipping point of a monetised life

The time-worn adage "'tis impossible to be sure of anything but Death and Taxes" needs to be updated to "'tis impossible to be sure of anything but Death, Taxes, and Fees". Fee is a generic term for all kinds of charges tacked on to the invoice with the sole purpose of gouging the customer. Few customers question the legitimacy of these extra charges.

Some fees are mandated by law, as, for example, in the beverage industry, where stores are required to charge the customer a refundable deposit on beer, soft drink, and water sold in bottles or cans using recyclable material such as metal, glass or plastic. It is all the other types of fees that I wish to comment on.

The most egregious fees are charged by companies which facilitate the movement of physical and virtual goods – airlines, railways, banks, electric utilities, telecoms, hotels and motels, restaurants, e-commerce companies, etc. Here is a non-exhaustive list of charges compiled from actual bills: cancellation fee, booking fee, restocking fee, merchant function (?), tariff surcharge, other delivery surcharges, baggage fees, preferential seat fee, no-show fee, late fee, wire transfer, incoming wire transfer, paper statement fee, bank teller visit fee, itinerary change fee, SMS notification, shipping and handling, ATM fee (own bank or some other entity), miscellaneous charges, and service charge.

While most of the above fees are self-explanatory, some of them require an explanation which is not readily available, since these days, humans have been cut out of the loop in telephone conversations. Virtual agents are practically useless in this regard.

The newest entrant to the fee game played by businesses, large and small, is the 'convenience fee'. The fee, amounting to around 4%, is applied to every electronic payment that involves charge cards – credit as well as debit. I am puzzled as to why a company would charge a customer for using a debit card. Also, doesn't the scheme facilitate a company to under-report income to tax authorities? Electronic payments can be tracked, but cash transactions cannot be.

Roger Marshall
is a computer scientist, a newly minted Luddite and a cynic

In the US, no matter what store you walk into, you will always find a 'tip' jar or its electronic equivalent at the cash register; the electronic version is especially suggestive of how much tip you should leave – the percentage options you are presented with are usually these: 15, 18, 20, 25, 30 or 'other'. The word 'tip', in this context, is really an acronym which stands for 'to insure promptness'.

Also, the practice of asking the customer if they wish to round up their purchase amount so that the extra pennies go to supporting some charity has become quite standard. One is never really sure if customer contributions to charity end up lining the business owner's pockets. The time-worn practice of *baksheesh* in India has been repurposed in the US and made more or less obligatory – shaming the customer or making them feel guilty is part of the marketing process.

About 75 years ago, credit cards were introduced to make shopping convenient, and now, we have a convenience fee. Thirty years ago, the web came into being and made searching for information a lot easier. As per Google's own statistics, there are around six trillion Google searches per year. Just imagine an AI-enhanced Google starting to charge users a penny per search. It is bound to happen in the near future. AI chips and data centres do cost a lot of money, you know.

When the US accuses leaders of third-world nations of being corrupt and making it difficult for US businesses to operate freely in those countries, America conveniently forgets that it is also engaging in corrupt practices, albeit legalised, by allowing lobbying groups and political action committees, code-named 'superpacs', to facilitate various preferred legislative agenda items at the state and federal levels.

The US has a Foreign Corrupt Practices Act to prevent American companies, especially arms and aeroplane manufacturers, from offering bribes to foreign officials to obtain contracts in those countries. One man's meat is another man's poison, but only in certain situations. Ask Latin America or the oil-rich kingdoms of the Middle East. Qatar did give Trump a free Boeing and lucrative cryptocurrency deals for his sons. And Qatar does host the largest US Air Force base outside of the US.

The Empire is always ready to strike. And Google will be at the forefront, leading the charge.

THE Z FACTOR

2025 belonged to Trump and AI; 2026 might too

Mohamed Zeeshan
is a student of all things global and, self-confessedly, master of none, notwithstanding his Columbia Master's, a stint with the UN and with monarchs in the Middle East
@ZeeMohamed_

It has been quite a decade so far. The 2020s opened with the assassination of a major Iranian military officer. Many expected that event to lead to a region-wide war, disrupt global oil flows, and shape the coming decade. They couldn't have been more wrong.

Days after Qassem Soleimani was killed by an American drone strike in Iraq, he quickly became a footnote. A once-in-a-century pandemic overturned the world for the better part of three years. Then came the invasion of Ukraine, which sparked the largest war in Europe since World War II. And then, the Hamas attack on Israel led to chaos and violence in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and even on college campuses in the United States.

Heading into 2025, the world was bracing for the return of Donald Trump as US president. Trump had been reelected on the back of widespread economic frustration in the US, and he immediately pledged to relaunch the trade nationalism that had dominated his first term. Only weeks into his term, Trump made good on that promise – imposing a baseline tariff rate on every country in the world and tacking on additional surcharges on a few.

Sudden and rapid changes in trade policy remain a cornerstone of US foreign policy. Trump sees tariffs as a tool of leverage, amping them up and dialling them down based on how Washington's negotiations and relations with each of those countries go.

Tariffs are now so central to Washington's worldview that they can be taken as a relatively reliable indicator of the health of bilateral relations. China, for instance, has travelled from as high as 145% in April to 10%. That journey culminated in a relatively sanguine meeting between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in November. India, on the other hand, remains subject to 50% – among the highest rates for any US partner today. Yet, all of these rates could change quite quickly if Trump's relations with the leaders of those countries improve or sour. That means no US trade partner can count on stability heading into the new year.

Ordinarily, such volatility would send the global economy into a tizzy. The reason that did not happen was because of the other great disruptor of 2025: artificial intelligence. Three years after the initial launch of ChatGPT, AI has taken an iron hold on the fortunes of the global economy. This year, AI mania drove US stock markets to unprecedented highs. Almost 40% of those indices are now dominated by a handful of AI-related stocks. Many of those companies have pledged to invest trillions of dollars over the next few years, and global capital flows have followed them.

But there are costs. Many economists believe that the US stands on the precipice of yet another bubble, reminiscent of the dot-com bust at the turn of the century and the real estate collapse that came with the 2008 global recession.

These fears might be hypothetical and imagined. What is far more real is the fact that AI has already hollowed out parts of the global labour market. This year, companies such as Amazon and Microsoft cut over 50,000 jobs because of the adoption of AI. One report says that global banks could cut as many as 200,000 jobs in the next 3 to 5 years.

The irresistible rise of AI also poses other risks. AI can be used to build advanced weapons, pull off cyber crimes, and spread disinformation capable of destabilising entire countries. Think of AI not as a type of software but as a sophisticated weapon, akin to nuclear technology. If AI technology ends up in the wrong hands, everyone from rogue regimes to criminal syndicates may use it to amplify their actions and hasten their goals.

So far, in sharp contrast to his otherwise interventionist approach to trade and global business, Trump has handled these challenges in a relatively laissez-faire manner. This month, Trump cleared the sale of advanced AI chips to China, after they had been banned by former President Joe Biden on national security grounds. Shortly thereafter, he signed an executive order limiting the ability of US states to regulate AI.

The logic behind these deregulatory moves is simple. In a world seemingly dominated by AI, the US hopes to become an early-mover, capturing the global market by exporting its chips to the world, and hitching the economy to the AI wave for as long as it lasts. In 2025, AI established its roots. In 2026, the world will look to catch up.

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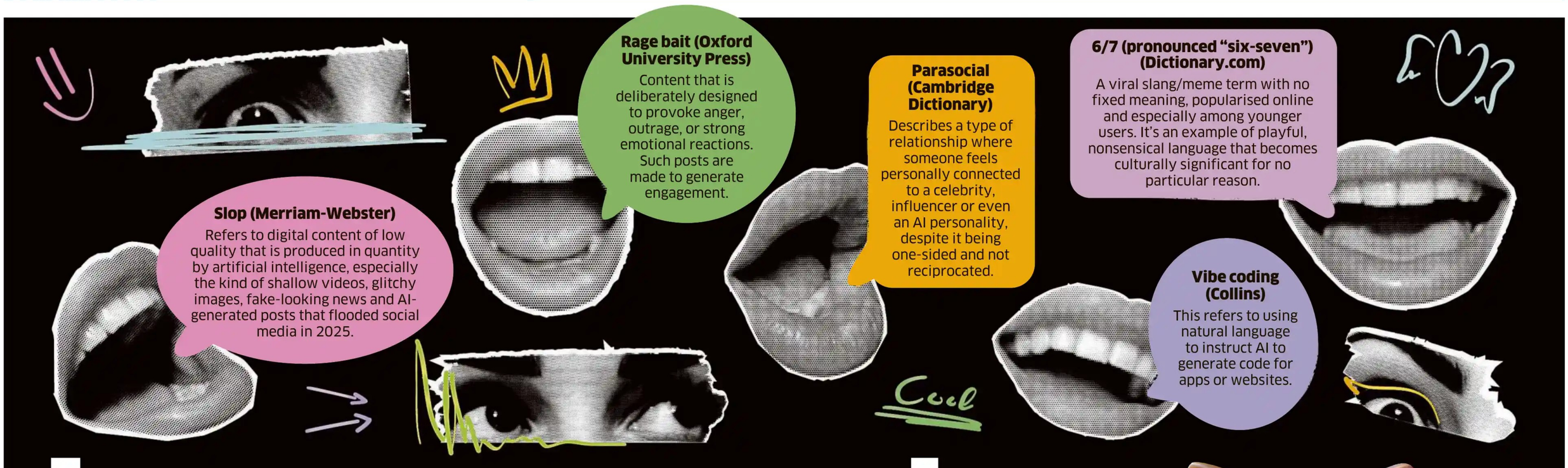
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Vibe coding (Collins)
This refers to using natural language to instruct AI to generate code for apps or websites.
Cool

Is meme-speak rewiring us?

In the concluding part of our series on internet language and its impact on thinking in 2025, Rashmi Vasudeva examines how online slang grew teeth, turning emotion, outrage and irony into neat, pat phrases that are quietly altering the way we argue and connect

In 2025, social media did its thang. It shrank the world, expanded and renamed it. Many times. The most telling changes? Those were not on platforms or formats but in vocabulary. Initially, it was 'cringe' if anyone other than Gen Z used them, but soon, words like ragebait, AI slop, doomscrolling, corecore, biohack, and delulu slipped out of feeds and into dinner-table conversations, media articles and even political speeches. Language is the real viral — not easily disposable, it lingers, instructs and quietly rewires how we think.

Linguists have always insisted that language is never just a description of reality. It shaped perception then, and it does now, more than ever before. In fact, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that the very structure of language influences cognition.

However, few imagined that this principle would one day be bolstered by algorithms. Today, vocabulary changes before you can utter the letter V, and worse, boxes entire moral judgments into viral phrases. For instance, take the word ragebait. Is it not instantly framing anger as manipulation? Call something a slop, and there is no further discussion about its possible creativity, or even its intended purpose or meaning. Dangerously enough, the phrase is doing the thinking for you, what experts have come to call, smartly enough, "cognitive offloading with attitude."

According to an ongoing study by the Pew Research Center that is tracking the migration of youth language into mainstream channels, media platforms amplify this process by prioritising short, emotionally loaded phrases (think girl math, ick). These circulate faster, and thus, because of the feedback loop they generate, the terms earn for themselves both authority and authenticity as they tumble into more and more feeds.

Psychologist and MIT professor Sherry Turkle, in her book 'Reclaiming Conversation', argues that thanks to this influx of new-age words, we are now bartering depth for speed and nuance for control — a trade-off that suits social media platforms very well, thank you. Why try to understand your feelings about your work and marriage? Why try to self-examine your despair? You can just mutter the word 'doomscrolling' and be done with it!

Sociolinguist John McWhorter, in his seminal work 'Words on the Move,' warns that when Gen Z vernacular becomes mainstream, its "emotional logic" becomes viral as well.

Entire relationships, careers and even your own self-image can be rated, sneered at, or memefied. So an argument with your partner can be called 'toxic', and there ends the matter. Label a person 'ick', and the effect ripples outward. Such emotional shortcuts don't invite conversation; they close it.

And that word which is not a word — 6/7 — is really just a shorthand for being almost but not quite enough. Funny in certain contexts, perhaps, but pretty brutal in its dismissiveness. Enough to make a mild, earnest person feel embarrassed for being an "almost". Which is why McWhorter says such language casually legitimises cultural fallacies.

Social theorist Byung-Chul Han says this is the vocabulary of burnout in his book, The Burnout Society. He examines how Internet language makes us joke our way through despair and call it self-awareness. Worryingly, these shortcuts have measurable psychological costs.

Research into doomscrolling, for example, links habitual negative-news consumption to existential anxiety and mistrust. And using the word in such an offhand manner normalises mental ill-health.

And yet, it's not all doom. This very language also creates solidarity. Shared terms help people articulate experiences that once felt isolating. Naming burnout, manipulation, or algorithmic fatigue can be comforting. As writer and technologist Zeynep Tufekci has noted, digital cultures can both flatten and mobilise emotion. The same shortcuts that dismiss can also help us connect.

The danger lies in forgetting that these are tools, not truths. In 2025, our feeds didn't merely record our preferences. They shaped and are shaping who we're becoming. And we better make a note of it before we nonchalantly dismiss them as...err...skibidi.

How **language** tints the world

If words can soften perception, they can also harden it. Colour language can stereotype, exoticise or sanitise; it is the unseen force shaping how we see and feel

A company, albeit a useful one, announcing its chosen Colour of the Year has become an online event of sorts. Everyone rushes to their socials to dispense *gyaan* on how absurd (or fabulous) the choice is. No, there is no middle ground, sorry.

But that's just the thing: we hear and smell a colour long before we see it. And the language we use to describe it, even to ourselves, quietly shapes our perception, not just of the colour itself but of everything we associate with it. Pantone's Colour of the Year for 2026, Cloud Wonder, sounds less like a shade and more like something you might want to step into (or twitch your nose at, whatever your preference) rather than simply look at and mull about.

Seen in isolation, colour is more physics than poetry: wavelengths, cones and rods, neural processing. But colour, as we live it, is memory, culture, mind and heart. It's the difference between saying "muted white" and "Cloud Wonder." One feels flat, even boring; the other suggests something beyond — a pause, a softness, a suspended state of calm. The words we use frame the colour we see in our mind's eye.

Before writing this article, I asked a few friends to describe their favourite colour to me. Their responses confirmed why colour naming has always mattered more than we admit. A colleague described mauve as "saffron in the sun." A fellow journalist said his favourite shade of yellow reminded him of the feel of mid-morning winter sun on his skin. Staying with the theme, while one friend found blue to be like "oceanic whispers," another described it as a "sky canvas, blank." Words that sing of possibility — evoking anticipation, not emptiness but readiness; waiting to become.

This is why phrasing matters so deeply to marketers, designers and artists. When a beige wall paint is described as "oat milk," or a lipstick shade as "blushing twilight," do not dismiss it as whimsical. This is a clever tapping into associative memory. Language cues sensation. A colour called "hospital green" will never feel the same as "mystic wonder," as a Bengaluru-based writer describes the very same shade of forest green. The mind fills in the gaps, borrowing from experience, emotion and imagination.

Psychologically, this is crucial because our brains are prediction machines. We constantly anticipate how something will make us feel before we fully experience it. This is why a photographer friend thinks green is "mossy moon," while the same colour becomes "earth's vibe" for a nature-loving colleague.

Studies in cognitive psychology suggest that labels influence perception by activating emotional and sensory networks in the brain. When a colour is described as "warm," "calming," or "electric," we are more likely to feel warmth, calm or stimulation upon encountering it. The word does not follow the feeling; it often leads it.

This effect extends beyond objects into how we perceive people and situations. Think of how quickly colour-coded language seeps into personality and morality: someone can be "grey," "dark," "golden," or "blue." We speak of "red flags" and "green lights," of "black moods" and "rose-tinted" views. These are not neutral metaphors. They shape judgment. A "grey area" feels uncertain and morally ambiguous, while a "white lie" is almost cleansed by its colour.

Memory, too, is filtered through this lens. Childhood summers are rarely recalled as merely yellow; they are "sun-drenched," "honeyed," "golden." Trauma is often rendered in darker hues. Over time, language edits memory, tinting it, intensifying certain emotional frequencies while muting others. What makes this especially powerful today is the saturation of visual culture. We scroll through thousands of images daily, but it is the captions, names and descriptors that anchor meaning. A colour without a name passes quickly. A colour with a story lingers. Cloud Wonder does not just suggest a shade; it promises respite. In an anxious, overstimulated moment, that promise is potent.

There is, however, a quiet responsibility embedded in this. If words can soften perception, they can also harden it. Colour language can stereotype, exoticise or sanitise. Think of how skin tones are described; how some hues are deemed "neutral" while others are marked as "bold" or "ethnic." These linguistic choices reveal hierarchies we have absorbed without question. This is also why many protested the choice of white — with all its loaded connotations — as the colour of the year in an era of deep polarisation and resurgent racism.

To pay attention to how we name colour, then, is to pay attention to how we frame reality. Words do not merely describe what we see; they train us in how to see.

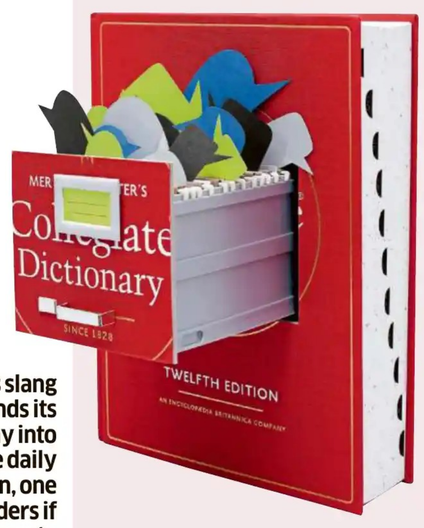
RASHMI VASUDEVA

CONTEST ALERT!

Describe your favourite colour in a phrase of not more than four words.
Send your responses to **dhonsunday@deccanherald.co.in** on or before December 31.
The best three responses will be awarded prizes.

The slow decline of Urban Dictionary

Created as a parody of the stuffier, more formal dictionaries of yore, as more definitions got uploaded, people began treating the website as a valuable resource



As slang finds its way into the daily lexicon, one wonders if a separate dictionary is even necessary. NYT PIC

There was a time when Urban Dictionary felt essential. Twenty-six years ago, when then-college freshman Aaron Peckham founded the lo-fi website, internet lingo was making its way into the mainstream faster than the slang of any earlier, offline communities. Users submitted their own comprehensive definitions and colourful example sentences.

But when the latest edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary hit shelves this November, words that were once defined in basements, at the bar stool or on Urban Dictionary's back pages got the official legacy lexicographical treatment. For the first time in 20 years, and only the 12th time since 1898, Merriam-Webster added more than 5,000 new words. "Rizz," "doomscroll", and "dumbphone" made the cut, signalling the legendary publication's embrace of a wider range of language sources.

This isn't the first time big dictionaries have caught up to 21st-century slang. Last December, the Oxford English Dictionary named "brain rot" its 2024 word of the year. This year, it was "rage bait." On social media, Merriam-Webster and Dictionary.com embrace a humorous, up-to-date approach to the internet's word of the day, whether it be "demure" or "slop."

And as Big Dictionary is getting hip, Urban Dictionary has devolved into a "graveyard taken over by the manosphere or general online troglodytes," said Amanda Montell, a linguist and author of a book about language and gender. The puerile jokes and irreverent snark of the old Urban Dictionary has curdled into a world of vicious, vitriolic vulgarity, racism and sexism.

In the meantime, Peter Sokolowski, editor-at-large at Merriam-Webster, points to an explicit term, enshittification, coined by Cory Doctorow, an internet culture expert, to describe a digital platform that becomes gradually worse over time. "It seems like the textbook case, right?"

A home for 'Instant Argot'

Slang didn't always have a formal lexicographical home, said Terry Victor, author of "The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English." In fact, that was often the very point of slang — that it existed on the margins of society, not in the pages of your grandfather's dictionary.

In the past, the jargon of a small community was hidden from others, protected as the intimate language of a given subculture. But the intimacy of that shared language blew up with the rise of the internet, Victor said. The language of these once-remote worlds spreading wider and more quickly led to the necessity of a resource like Urban Dictionary, where a person who came across a seemingly boring word like "furry" could discover an entirely new lifestyle and subculture.

Peckham first created Urban Dictionary as a parody of the stuffier, more formal dictionaries of yore. But by the early 2000s, as more and more users uploaded those definitions, people began treating it as a valuable resource. In 2014, *The New York Times* deemed it a "lexicon for instant argot." Lawyers around the world cited Urban Dictionary in court, and scholars discussed standardising its use in academic work. "It was speed, it was crowdsourcing, it was people paying attention to pop culture," Jess Zafarris, author of "Useless Etymology: Offbeat Word Origins for Curious Minds," said. "Plenty of song lyrics and community slang hinges on the in crowd's ability to know what their subcultural colloquialisms mean, and Urban Dictionary was able to document it."

But Zafarris points to Donald Trump's election in 2016 and the subsequent polarisation and intense rhetoric as a turning point for the site. Because Urban Dictionary operated as a crowdsourced platform, anyone could upload a definition, and soon enough, popular words were flooded with competing definitions. People upvoted entries as they saw fit, elevating explanations of all kinds — some accurate, some not, and some blatantly offensive.

"These aren't helpful anymore," Zafarris said. "These are people being funny, being satirical and being ugly in many ways, too. The open model enabled speed, but also toxicity."

In July 2020, Peckham posted an update to the Urban Dictionary blog, titled "Rethinking the Dictionary." Peckham invited users to share their thoughts and ideas via a feedback form, and in subsequent posts, he promised to update content guidelines and redevelop the site's moderation system. "We know that the real world can be offensive and is full of offensive words," he wrote in the blog post. "But there is a difference between using Urban Dictionary to document the meaning of an offensive word and using it to celebrate or endorse an offensive meaning."

That said, Urban Dictionary isn't dead yet. The platform listed more than 17 million definitions as of 2025. New updates to the site included Urban Dictionary Promote, a flat-fee advertising system, and an experimental artificial intelligence-powered chat feature, no longer in use.

The path for those hardy sorts of words, the survivors with legs, looks different from what it did back in 1999, when Urban Dictionary first went online. The path today may include various pit stops along the way, from tiny corners of the internet to going viral on TikTok to the pages of the *Times*.

"Every word has its own pace," Sokolowski said. And the lucky few — "hard pass" and "dad bod" among them — have made it all the way to Merriam-Webster's 12th edition.

NYT

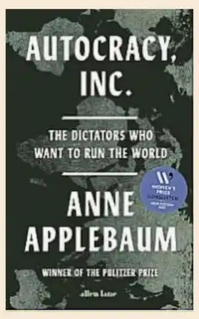
THE ONES THAT COUNTED

From what was a noisy year in publishing, Rashmi Vasudeva curates, in no particular order, the Indian and international titles in fiction and non-fiction that managed to rise above the din

NON-FICTION

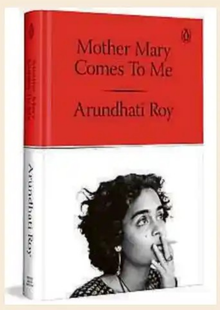
Autocracy, Inc: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World by Anne Applebaum

Originally published in 2024, the book gained a new audience in 2025 with the release of its paperback edition, coinciding with global elections and a rise in democratic backsliding. Applebaum's critical and sharp tracing of how modern autocrats collaborate across borders through money, technology, surveillance and disinformation reads like a veritable thriller. Its timeliness is almost worrying. A great synthesis of investigative journalism and her deep understanding of geopolitics, the book gathered much critical acclaim, and for good reason.



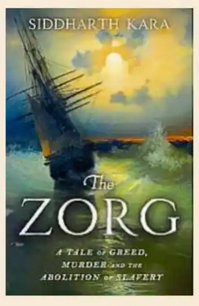
Mother Mary Comes to Me by Arundhati Roy

This is what the hacks called the 'publishing event' of the year, and its reception in both Indian and international markets quite matched the pre-release hype. With her signature lyrical prose and imagery, in *Mother Mary*, Roy blends religion, political history, and her own raw memories to write a book that is perhaps, in many ways, too intimate and tender to handle. Interestingly, it was praised for its stylistic restraint, something Roy is often accused of not adhering to in her political essays and novels.



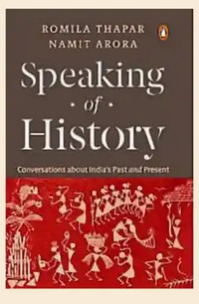
The Zorg: A Tale of Greed and Murder by Siddharth Kara

Siddharth Kara returns with his second deeply researched work after the Pulitzer-nominated Cobalt Red, his investigation into child labour and everyday violence in the Congo. In Zorg, he reconstructs the horrific voyage of a slave ship and the massacre of enslaved Africans that eventually sped up the abolitionist movement in Europe. Kara's strength lies in his ability to weave deeply human tales of greed and violence with the so-called 'colder' issues of economic interests outpacing moral values and modern systems of exploitation.



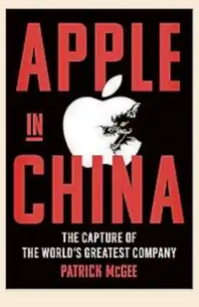
Speaking of History: Conversations about India's Past and Present by Romila Thapar & Namit Arora

A far-reaching conversation between two eminent historians, the book examines how India's past is researched, interpreted and disputed in public life. It translates complex academic arguments into clear, readable prose without flattening their nuance, helping readers understand why history continues to be a site of intense political and cultural struggle in the present. A must-read in these times of contested histories and post-truth anomalies.



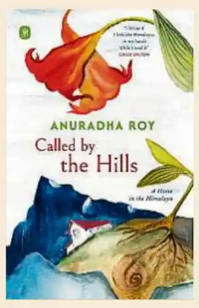
Apple in China: The Capture of the World's Greatest Company by Patrick McGee

A deeply reported work of corporate and geopolitical journalism, the book traces how Apple's growing reliance on China transformed not only the company's business model but also the architecture of global manufacturing. Drawing on extensive reporting, it reveals the hidden interdependence between technology firms, labour systems and state power, and the political compromises embedded in modern supply chains. Many critics have praised it as the year's defining work on global capitalism.



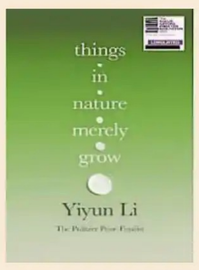
Called by the Hills by Anuradha Roy

Anuradha Roy excels in blending storytelling and lyricism, and what better place to do so than near the Himalayas! The book delves into the author's relocation to the mountains, her growing bond with the landscape around her, as well as the local communities and the daily rhythms of solitude that she comes to love. This is nature writing at its best, evoking a sense of yearning and guilt, for it makes you deeply consider our responsibility towards our natural world.



Things in Nature Merely Grow by Yiyun Li

A raw and haunting memoir of loss and motherhood, this work emerged as one of the year's most widely examined nonfiction titles. Li eschews comfort, approaching grief with measured philosophical insight and unflinching honesty. Her narrative has influenced ongoing discussions about how personal sorrow and resilience are expressed in modern literature.



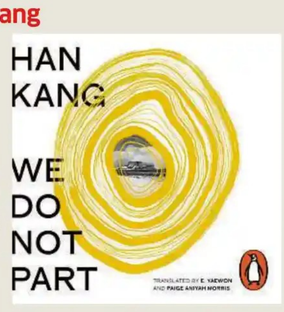
A Sixth of Humanity: Independent India's Development Odyssey by Devesh Kapur & Arvind Subramanian

A seminal work of economic history, this book reinterprets India's post-independence path as a unique and ongoing experiment in development. Merging macroeconomic analysis with political commentary, it examines how policy decisions, institutional frameworks, and social priorities have shaped the nation's growth. It also offers a comprehensive account of the challenges and achievements that have defined India's developmental journey.

FICTION

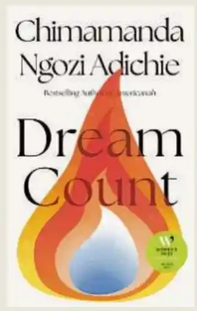
We Do Not Part by Han Kang

A haunting and lyrical exploration of friendship, memory, and the echoes of historical trauma. Set on Jeju Island, the novel traces the enduring impact of the Jeju massacre through intimate, dreamlike sequences, blending personal emotion with historical weight. Its poetic narrative and deeply felt character work make it a standout in contemporary fiction.



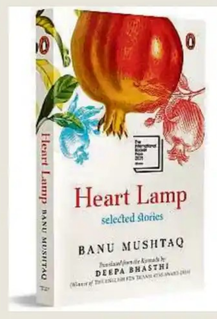
Dream Count by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

A sweeping literary novel that interlaces the lives of four women across Nigeria and the US, examining friendship, inequality, privilege, and resilience. Adichie's nuanced characterisation and deft storytelling illuminate the complexities of personal and social ties, making it an essential read for its richness and scope.



Heart Lamp: Selected Stories by Banu Mushtaq (translated by Deepa Bhasthi)

This collection of short stories, originally in Kannada, illuminates the everyday lives, struggles, and resilience of women in India. With elegance and empathy, each story captures the textures of community, personal desire, and social tension, highlighting the power of regional narratives brought to a wider audience.



Audition by Katie Kitamura

A tense, psychological narrative centred on an actress confronted by a young man claiming to be her son. Kitamura's precise, controlled prose explores identity, perception, and the boundaries of truth, crafting a story that is as unsettling as it is compelling. Its depth and psychological subtlety make it a defining novel of the year.

The Beast Within by Rudraneil Sengupta

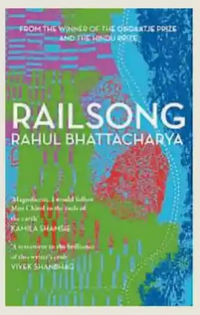
A gripping crime novel set in Delhi, weaving a haunting murder investigation with social insight. Sengupta's narrative examines caste, class, and justice while maintaining suspense and emotional depth, marking it as a standout work in Indian crime fiction.

Flesh by David Szalay

An expansive narrative connecting episodes across the life of a Hungarian man, exploring desire, mortality, and the human experience. With formal inventiveness and emotional intensity, the novel offers a sweeping view of life's pleasures and challenges, solidifying its place among 2025's most ambitious works.

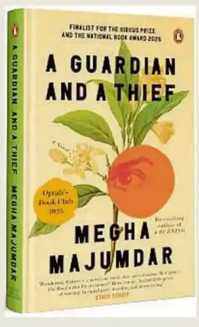
Railsong by Rahul Bhattacharya

A richly layered literary novel following Charulata Chitol as she leaves her railway township for Bombay, navigating personal growth against the backdrop of political and social change. Bhattacharya's elegant prose and intricate portrayal of individual and national transformation make this a compelling, immersive read.



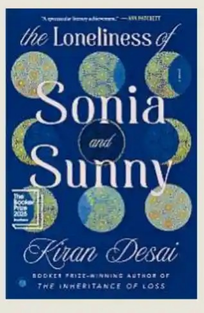
A Guardian and a Thief by Megha Majumdar

Set in a near-future Kolkata, this novel intertwines the lives of a mother and a petty thief whose fates collide over a stolen passport. Majumdar's story combines moral complexity with human resilience, examining hope, survival, and the choices that define us, making it a deeply resonant literary achievement.



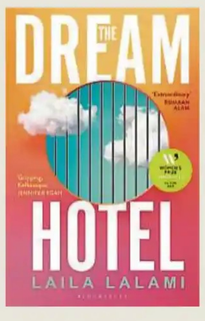
The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny by Kiran Desai

Quite the most talked-about literary novel of 2025, Kiran Desai was a favourite to win the Booker this year. Although the novel did not eventually win, the sweeping saga that follows Sonia and Sunny, two Indian immigrants whose life throbs with the ache of displacement even while they criss-cross loves, continents, cultures and aspirations, is an enchanting read. Desai's prose was uniformly praised for its restraint and elegance.



The Dream Hotel by Laila Lalami

Much lauded for its blend of speculative dystopian sensibility with urgent political issues, this was longlisted for the 2025 Women's Prize for Fiction. The novel tells the story of Sara Hussein, a Moroccan-American museum archivist and mother who is detained by a mysterious government agency. What initially looks like an anomaly stretches into a nightmarish ordeal. Lalami's take on AI surveillance feels eerily close to reality, despite the dystopian setting, or perhaps because of it.



Books to watch out for in 2026

Some books begin to gather a quiet hum of anticipation long before their release. From literary fiction to reported nonfiction, these forthcoming titles offer a glimpse of the ideas, voices and stories set to shape our reading in the coming year. As always, blame us for judging by the cover and do not blame us for the list being (again) in no particular order.

The Complex by Karan Mahajan

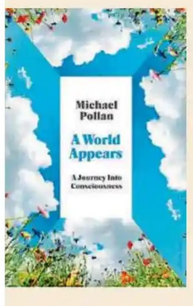
From the author of The Association of Small Bombs, this novel traces the lives of an Indian couple moving between India and the United States as their personal choices unfold alongside political unrest. With his trademark acuity, Mahajan examines questions of belonging, displacement, and the sacrifices ideology demands.

Make it Up as You Go Along by Shefali Shah

Among the many memoirs set to be released in 2026, this title stands out for its promise of candour. Written by one of India's most respected actors, this memoir tackles everything about the glitzy world of Bollywood, including ageism, love, being a working woman in the industry today, sexism, etc.

A World Appears by Michael Pollan

From the bestselling author of The Omnivore's Dilemma, this ambitious work turns to consciousness, arguably the most profound and unsolved puzzle in science and philosophy. Drawing on neuroscience, psychology, and lived experience, the book is expected to blend rigorous reporting with intellectual wonder, making complex ideas accessible.



Vigil by George Saunders

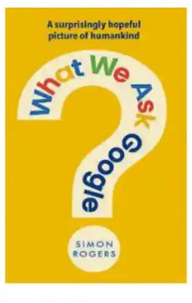
This promises to be a bold new novel from the Booker-winning author (Lincoln in the Bardo). Vigil blends existential inquiry with Saunders' signature humane voice, telling a layered story about mortality, redemption, and the afterlife. It promises both experimental structure and emotional depth — a must-read for literary fiction fans.

How to Talk to AI by Jamie Bartlett

Do we all need this book or do we? This promises to be a timely guide to understanding artificial intelligence, all its capabilities, risks, and societal impact, written in accessible language for a broad audience. As artificial intelligence continues transforming work, creativity, and ethics, this book aims to demystify the technology shaping our lives and our future.

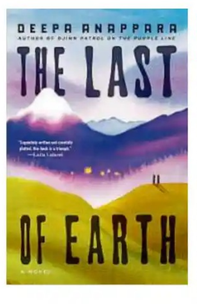
What We Ask Google by Tim Hartford

Ever wondered what goes through other people's minds — their silly questions, their inner anxieties, hopes and dreams? In What We Ask Google, the company's Data Editor Simon Rogers explores insights from the world's biggest dataset: an epic snapshot, two decades long and counting, of our collective brain. What it reveals about us might surprise you.

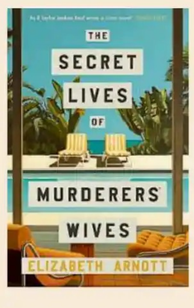


The Last of Earth by Deepa Annapara

A richly imagined historical novel by the acclaimed author of Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line about two outsiders in nineteenth-century Tibet, blending adventure, empire-era politics, and cross-cultural encounters. Anappara's evocative prose and deep research promise a sweeping narrative that highlights lesser-told histories within the Indian literary orbit.



The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives by Elizabeth Arnott



You've heard of the men who kill, but what about the women who loved them?

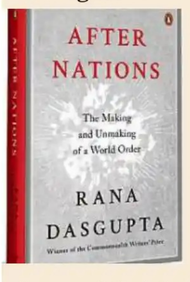
It's a baking hot summer in 1960s California, and three women have formed an unlikely friendship. From the outside, Beverley, Elsie and Margot lead idyllic lives, but behind the false smiles and glittering pools lies the truth: their husbands are some of the country's most notorious convicted killers. When a string of local killings hits the news, the women, underestimated and overlooked, are hurled into an investigation of their own.

In The Shade of Many Trees by Kadambari Devarajan

Nat Geo explorer Kadambari Devarajan uses seven trees from her *paati*'s garden to lead her reader down endlessly fascinating rabbit holes into a reckoning with history, the natural world we are tied to, childhood nostalgia, and unmitigated climate change. Using seven trees—the coconut, the peepul, the guava, the gooseberry, the sandalwood, the neem, and the moringa—from her grandmother's garden as windows, she takes each to explore social, economic, cultural, and ecological angles of conservation.

After Nations by Rana Dasgupta

As American hegemony unwinds and autocracies rise, the nation-state system is unravelling, leaving billions insecure. In After Nations, Rana Dasgupta traces how this system emerged—from ancient empires to modern tech giants—and why it's failing today. Urging a reimagining of citizenship, law, and economy forour global, fragile era, this is a bold, urgent analysis of the world's political unravelling and what might replace it.



CURATED BY RASHMI VASUDEVA

Equity, beyond TOKENISM

METTE JOHANSSON

"We're making great progress," the CEO said in a meeting with his senior leaders. I looked around to see just one woman besides me, and only people with fair or fairly light skin. Progress, I thought, "can be very subjective." The comment was followed by a familiar refrain: "We do have diversity of thought — look at all the degrees in the room! Engineering, chemistry, business." He then highlighted the nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds present. But to me, "diversity of thought" in a room full of men rings an alarm.

UNMASKING LEADERSHIP

Because let's be honest: the real conversations still take place on the golf course, over beers, or in WhatsApp groups sans women.

Those networks remain tight and male. The boys still bring along their protégés. And the rest of us? We're still trying to break through the golf course ceiling. If that's "progress", we need to aim higher.

Meanwhile, women are leading the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work — company-wide committees, employee resource groups — unpaid. I've lost count of how many times I've heard companies ask: "How do we get men involved in our diversity and inclusion committees?" Some even suggest, "Maybe we should pay them to join the DEI committee." Pay men to do the work women have been doing unpaid for years? It would be laughable if it weren't so insulting. Women are already project managers of the unpaid labour at home — childcare, elder care, the emotional calendar, the endless life admin.

And now, in the workplace, we're expected to shoulder the unpaid burden of diversity too?

Evolution or revolution?

History reminds us that sometimes a single bold act changes everything. Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old seamstress, refused to give up her seat to a white man one December evening in Alabama in 1955. Her defiance sparked a seismic shift in the civil rights movement.

Yet for every Rosa Parks, we need thousands taking an evolutionary step — small, daily actions that push the envelope. Like speaking up when someone is dismissed for being the "wrong profile" — too dark-skinned, too outspoken, too working-class, too female. And let's not underestimate what happens when we set targets and commit to them. In 2016, an Australian mining company set a goal: 40 per cent of new hires would be women by 2025.

At the time, only 17 per cent of their workforce was women. Today, in one of the world's most male-dominated industries, they're just a few hires away from reaching that goal.

The same was true when Ireland legalised gay marriage in May 2015. It was revolutionary, built on years of quiet evolution. That bold decision opened hearts, shifted norms, and normalised equality.

What's the real revolution?

We don't have to wait for the perfect revolution. We need bold leadership and the courage to act.

Evolution places responsibility on the individual — you be more inclusive, you speak up. Without systemic change and top-down commitment, the already overburdened need to carry the weight for others.

Maybe, the real revolution is to stop calling equity "radical"and start calling it necessary.

(The writer is a leadership coach, author and gender equity advocate, helping organisations cultivate inclusive and authentic leadership.)

While a commitment to the idea of diversity, equity, and inclusion is embedded in our constitutional design, debates around reservations and representation are still seen as "anti-merit" or "woke", says Kanav Narayan Sahgal

Merits of DEI

If there was one phrase that defined American corporate discourse in 2025, it was this: "DEI is dead." Once framed as both a moral obligation and a business imperative, the concept of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has, over the past few years, increasingly been portrayed as both illegitimate and suspect. Prominent political and corporate actors have openly disparaged it as "propaganda" (Elon Musk), dismissed it as a "hoax" (Donald Trump), and even called it "woke ideology" (2024 US presidential candidate Ron DeSantis).

But is there merit to these claims? Do diversity initiatives, in fact, erode merit? The Indian constitutional experience offers a striking counterpoint. In India, debates around DEI are neither novel nor externally imposed. And while the contemporary language of "DEI" may

be recent, an underlying commitment to inclusion has been embedded in India's constitutional design since Independence. Indian constitutional jurisprudence has rejected a purely formal conception of equality—one that treats all individuals identically, regardless of their social position or historical disadvantage.

Fixing structural inequalities

Instead, equality is understood as substantive, requiring the State to actively address structural exclusion in order to create genuinely equal opportunities. As Dr B R Ambedkar poignantly argued in 'Annihilation of Caste' (1936), the very idea of "pure meritocracy" is fundamentally flawed in deeply unequal societies because individual effort and ability are always mediated by the circumstances of one's birth, access to education, family networks, and inherited wealth, all of which shape opportunities and outcomes. Therefore, in such societies, any form of selection based solely on an individual's apparent "skills" actually rewards privilege rather than talent. One's merit, therefore, can only be accurately assessed after these structural inequalities are first addressed.

Gender too operates through similarly entrenched structures of disadvantage. Decades of evidence show that women's under-representation in education, employment, and political representation is not the result of individual incapacity, but of patriarchal arrangements. Viewed in this light, reservations for women and transgender persons may be seen as corrective mechanisms that question how merit itself is produced, recognised, and rewarded within gendered hierarchies. It is worth noting that in a landmark 2024 judgement delivered by a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India, the Court emphatically rejected the long-standing framing of reservations as being a trade-off between merit and efficiency.

ENGENDERED

Echoing Justice Chinnappa Reddy's influential observation in an earlier 1985 decision, the 2024 judgement reiterated that the real issue at hand was not between the "meritorious" and the "inefficient," but between those who had long been shielded from structures of exclusion and those who remained subject to them. As Justice Reddy put it in 1985, "The real conflict is between the class of people who have never been in, or who have already moved out of, the desert of poverty, illiteracy and backwardness and are entrenched in the oasis of convenient living, and those who are still in the desert and want to reach the oasis." Even though affirmative action jurisprudence in India does not presently extend to the organised private sector, debates on this question are ongoing.

No dilution of competence

But if we move away from the legalities of quota-based reservations in India to the broader principles underlying contemporary debates around corporate DEI, we observe strikingly similar discussions. DEI initiatives are also labelled as "anti-meritocratic," "socially engineered", or "corrosive" to institutional efficiency. Yet, study after study demonstrates that well-designed diversity initiatives do not dilute competence or performance; rather, they correct institutional blind spots, expand talent pools, and improve the quality of organisational decision-making.

Take, for instance, DEI policies that actively include queer employees. Research shows that inclusive workplaces enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction by creating environments where queer individuals can express their identities without fear of discrimination or harassment.

Language of "merit"

Why, then, does the language of "merit" continue to function as such a powerful rhetorical device against reservations and DEI? Harvard political philosophy professor Michael Sandel, in his 2020 bestseller, 'The Tyranny of Merit', argues that modern, secular notions of merit are deeply rooted in older religious ideas of a "cosmic meritocracy".

The rhetoric of merit is deeply rooted in historical inequities, cultural norms, religious expectations, and hierarchies of privilege. Actions that we consider "meritorious" cannot simply be viewed as measures of talent; they are often mechanisms through which caste, class, and gender privilege are reproduced. Given that queer people and women already face unique barriers in many spheres of life, claims of merit in such spaces cannot be taken at face value. To be clear, this is not a wholesale dismissal of merit. It is a call to think about it more critically. When we begin to see DEI and reservations as restorative tools to correct historical wrongs, we may stop branding them as "anti-merit" or "woke."

(The author is a communications manager at Nyaaya, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and can be reached at sahgalkanav@gmail.com)

Saying no to ryokans without Mt Fuji views, wanting multiple experiences on one Bali trip, and seeking the familiar comfort of Indian food... Khyati Maloo decodes itinerary requests from Indian travellers and reveals that Vietnam, South Korea and Japan are on many 2026 wishlists

Roads taken and roads that beckon

Vietnam was the golden child of 2025, and is likely to be popular next year as well. (PHOTOS BY AUTHOR)

If someone had told me years ago that the best way to understand the psyche of the modern Indian would be through travel requests, I would've told them to get some fresh air. Yet here we are. After years of curating itineraries professionally, I've realised something startling.

My inbox is India.

Every desire, insecurity, aspiration and delusion shows up in the travel requests I receive. Because, unlike political surveys or market research, nobody performs their "best self" when asking for a holiday.

So here is my cultural study. A whole country, decoded through its travel requests and by the time you reach the end, you may spot yourself lurking somewhere in here too.

Packed with 'experiences'

We want to live many lives. Ideally, all at the same time. There is something deeply endearing about the modern Indian traveller. One holiday is never just a holiday. Ask anyone why they're travelling, and you'll get a vague but poetic answer like, "We want to experience that country."

Believe me, 'experience' is doing a lot of heavy lifting in that sentence. Because when you ask, which experience? The answer is: all of them.

They want serenity, indulgence, adventure, introspection, Instagrammable corners, family bonding, and a shopping haul that proves your rupees were put to work. Anything less feels like a missed opportunity.

A family once asked me to design a Bali itinerary that had to have the spiritual temple visits, indulgent nightlife, kid-friendly beach clubs, some romantic photo shoots at the Instagrammable spots, sensory educational workshops for kids, all the best shopping spots, and also away from the crowds.

One trip must relax the adults, educate the children, fix family dynamics, produce profile pictures, heal burnout, justify school leave, strengthen marriages, deliver "me time," and ideally unlock some personal transformation.

Yet, I've started to see it differently. Indians don't buy single-purpose anything.

Bournvita jars become dal storage, old T-shirts become pocha, and takeaway boxes become tiffin. Why on earth would a holiday have just one function?

If we have spent savings, endured the visa process, begged HR for leave, and managed school schedules, the trip must justify its existence.

WRAPPING UP

Reelification of travel

There was a time, not very long ago, when people went to Paris because they liked art, bistros, and the chance to watch the Eiffel Tower. Today, people go to recreate a stranger's eight-second montage.I routinely get references sent to me, all with identical claims: "this will blow your mind", "why is no one talking about it", and "this is the must-visit hidden gem".

China is slowly generating interest among Indian travellers.

If reelification has done anything, it has turned bucket lists into aesthetic pressure. And this doesn't just stop at the places we should visit; these influencer reels have declared what we should feel, eat, wear, and capture once we get there.

I once had a traveller reject a stunning budget ryokan because it "didn't look Instagrammable enough." The poor ryokan had onsen, Kaiseki meals, and 150 years of history, but it lacked a bathtub with Mt. Fuji views and an archway for a slow-mo walk.

We expect trips to behave like content reels: fast-paced, fully lit, and curated. The only glitch is that life has poor lighting and bad hair days.

Indians head to European countries either during summer or the hectic Christmas-market season.

Don't get me wrong, I believe influencer reels didn't ruin travel. Instead, they inflated what we think travel owes us. In this case, turn our lives into one "mind-blowing" cinematic aspiration.

And in a country where one trip must already multitask, is it any surprise that we also expect it to look like a *Vogue* editorial while doing it?

Comfort of Indian food

A few years ago, a client messaged me from Paris. Not to marvel at the Louvre, but to tell, with joy, "The Indian store near Gare du Nord has Haldiram's." The Eiffel Tower can inspire awe, but nothing moves an Indian traveller like finding flavours from home in a foreign climate.

We want to step into new worlds, inhale foreign air, expand our minds, and yes, update our Instagram bios with flags of all the destinations we have experienced, but we would also really appreciate knowing there is dal, dosa or, at the very least, French fries within walking distance.

We surge towards wonder — glaciers, geishas, gondolas — but retreat instinctively to comfort. The traveller who was moved to tears by the grandeur of the Bavarian Alps sent me a voice note asking if he could find Maggi in Füsen. One wonders if emotional vulnerability makes the digestive systems of Indians slightly homesick.

Perhaps this is neither insecurity nor contradiction. We are living in a country where reality refreshes itself faster than our Instagram feed. So when we travel, we carry comfort along in the form of Maggi, pre-mix masala chai and freeze-dried pav bhaji.

And there is something undeniably human about that, like the child who needs a favourite toy when sleeping somewhere new.

Where India wants to go next

After all this decoding of who we are as travellers, the natural next question is, where are we going next?

Vietnam was 2025's golden child and shows no intention of stepping off the stage. It managed what Switzerland, with all its Bollywood glory, could not: it made us feel clever for choosing it. Many are now pairing Vietnam with Cambodia, because Indians enjoy a bargain, especially when one can boast "two countries, one trip."

Requests for the cherry blossom season in Japan roll in months, sometimes a year in advance. The Philippines has entered the honeymoon chat, mostly because there is finally a direct flight, and don't we adore efficiency?

China is tiptoeing back. Curiosity is returning, along with questions like "Do they speak English?" Women's groups are flocking to South Korea for skincare, kimchi and the possibility of being swept across the street by a well-dressed man with tragic childhood trauma.

While the East is basking in attention, the West isn't sulking. Europe has settled into two seasons: the April-to-August summer stampede and the November-December Christmas-market marathon.

Eastward, ho!

So yes, 2026 looks eastward, outward and slightly inward too. Two years as the 'itinerary whisperer' have revealed the India inside us — hopeful, demanding, indecisive, occasionally unreasonable, and always lovable. If you recognised yourself somewhere in these words, congratulations. You are gloriously, unmistakably Indian. And my inbox thanks you for the material.

(The author is an 'itinerary whisperer' and creates custom travel itineraries.)

EXCESS OUT, PURPOSE IN

Crafted meal experiences that tell stories may see a rise in demand.

Have we seen the last of generic bar menus and large, shiny spaces this year, and will micro concepts and curated dining experiences take over? Ruth DSouza Prabhu does some stock-taking of the food and beverage sector, ahead of 2026

It's that time when we recap the year that was and gaze into the crystal ball to predict what we think the next one is going to be like. Every sector is doing it, and perhaps the only one that can claim to be a truly delicious exploration is the food and beverage space!

Course correction

The year 2024 was when we saw restaurants open in record numbers, the volatility of the sector stabilising enough to be able to do so post Covid. Reported estimates at the beginning of 2025 said that we would be seeing as many as 1,000-2,000 restaurants a month open across cities. Those numbers wouldn't be a stretch if we were to look just around our neighbourhoods.

That said, 2025 was also a year of course correction.

F&B TRENDS

Templatised formats of restaurants, cloud kitchens and pubs reached their peak, and many that did not adapt to the diners' pulse, downed shutters. The culinary enthusiast grew increasingly discerning. They were happy to spend monies and pledge loyalty to establishments that consistently delivered good experiences in food, service and ambience. Price consciousness was no longer about being conservative while spending, but instead, became about raised expectations on what constituted bang for the buck.

So what are we saying goodbye to (or hope to) in the F&B world as we leave 2025 behind?

■ **Over-designed, under-thought-out concepts:** No longer is the diner impressed with all things big and shiny. If the experience doesn't tie together, it's going to be hard to sustain. That said, the diner of today is extremely driven by FOMO, largely created by social media blitzes and limited reservations. Over-hyping an under-thought concept does not help, nor does hoping word-of-mouth will do it for what may be a great idea. Both diners and F&B creators have to explore the horizons on either side.

■ **Generic bar menus:** The year saw a lot of interesting alcohol trends — it began with heavily technique-driven creations at the beginning, to end at smaller, concept-driven thematic bars — think wine dive bars, vinyl listening rooms with pub grub, signature cocktails and small plates only spaces, among others.

■ **Ear drum-piercing decibel levels:** This is still more hope than reality. While most places start off with music that lets you have a conversation, they may soon end up with decibel levels that make you hoarse trying to place an order, let alone have a gossip session. However, it is interesting to see that with the nostalgia wave currently on, several pubs and bars have consciously invested in sound systems that let you have that "conversation over a good meal".

The concept of small plates of different items on the menu has gathered steam.

■ **Everything-for-everyone menus:** Yes, when you have families with diverse palates, the demand for a multi-cuisine spread will not die out. But what has begun to happen is that these menus are now more focused, going micro-regional, and offering just as much of a premium experience as a single cuisine.

Looking ahead

As we head into 2026, the industry is clearly moving away from excess and towards intent. The base has been set, and it is only going to sharpen going forward. Some of what we are going see:

■ **Micro concepts:** It's going to be all about focus — single (micro) cuisine, dish, spirit restaurants and bars. Smaller seating numbers — in the 10 to 30 category will be on the rise (rising overheads a contributing factor).

■ **Balanced storytelling:** Diners want stories; they are curious. What they don't want is a speech. Balanced storytelling is going to rule the roost in 2026. Telling an impactful creation story in the time it takes for the glass or plate to go from tray to table is what we are going to see, going forward.

■ **Curated experiences:** The pop-up universe is going to continue full steam ahead. Domestic and international collaborations will continue to draw in crowds curious to see what is out there. Exclusive creations within these collaborations will be looked forward to. People will explore the curated micro-cuisine menu that introduces them to a whole new world of flavours, just as much as they will book a seat for a wine-whisky-craft spirit tasting session.

■ **Knowledge experiences:** The dining out audience is not hiding their geekiness anymore, and the momentum on knowledge-sharing F&B experiences is only going to increase. Hands-on foraging experiences, distillery and vineyard tours, expert talks by historians, farmers, craft spirit creators – both online and offline are going to be in demand.

This year was, in many ways, all about the F&B industry finding its footing and direction. As the year closes, the foundations have been laid, and 2026 will be about building some incredible layers. We raise a toast to all the culinary goodness the year ahead holds for us.

Concept-driven bars, such as wine bars, may replace generic bars.

Knowledge experiences, such as distillery tours, are likely to gain popularity in 2026.

SWEET INDULGENCE

Ingenious pairings

SWARNA SRIKANTH

Remember how festivals once began in our kitchens — with the aroma of ghee filling homes, and families coming together to stir kheer, shape marzipan, and bake wine cakes? That same warmth now comes with a twist — not just in packed sweet boxes and gift hampers, but in craft desserts that blend tradition and nostalgia with inventive flavours. Desi laddus and barfis are getting a hazelnut punch, and chocolate is also now finding a place in curated festive boxes.

Girish Nayak, Chief Mithaiwala at Bombay Sweet Shop says, "With festivals being a time of sweet indulgence and savoury cravings, every offering blends tradition and innovation. It keeps the soul of mithai alive, while adding a sparkle of surprise."

"Festive gifting has evolved; every innovation begins with a time-honoured recipe, which is reinterpreted for today's palate," says Arvind Dadu, Managing Director of Anand Sweets, a legacy sweet shop.

Gulkand ganache.

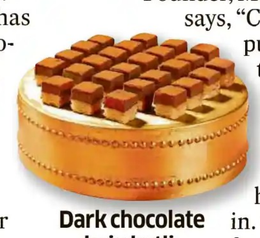
fusions to caramel crunch delights, every piece tells a story of celebration and care," says Neeraj Agrawal, Director, Haldiram's.

If you are someone who opens sweet dabbas to grab kaju katlis, Nayak points out that his brand's Indie Katli Bites is where the "traditional mithai meets dark chocolate ganache for a bite that's indulgent yet comfortingly familiar."

Chocolate-y twist

While chocolates have joined the ingredient list of traditional dessert preparations, like in Anand Sweets' gulkhand ganache recipe, Bombay Sweet Shop's Hazelnut besan laddu and more, they have also earned their own festive spotlight, especially among younger gifters and kids.

Chaitanya Muppala, Founder, Manam Chocolate, says, "Chocolates haven't pushed mithai off the table. As tastes evolve, chocolates especially those crafted with Indian sensibilities, have found a way in. Chocolate, made from fine-flavour Indian cacao and paired with familiar notes like coconut, curry leaf, rose, jaggery, and spices are redefining what a festive sweet can be."



Dark chocolate kaju katli.

"Chocolate brings in a different kind of charm. People want something that feels personal but still polished. Chocolate checks both boxes. It's familiar, but it also feels new and wow," says Mahek Sugandh, founder and head chocolatier at Cacao Springs and The Binge. "Traditional Indian sweets have an emotional connect, but reimagining them with modern flavours (like chocolate) makes it more experiential and indulgent," Mahek sums up.

Fruit-flavoured

How about celebrating the season with a coconut blush brownie instead of the desi nariyal barfi or skipping the amrakhand (mango shrikhand) to enjoy some mango mousse? While you might still enjoy an authentic mango marzipan, the popular sweets and namkeen brand, Haldiram's, which recently launched House of Mishti for fusion pops, acknowledges the trend with its fruit-flavoured delight. "House of Mishti's craft desserts bring a newness to festive gifting. From rose-kissed cashew

Wellness

BUZZWORDS OF 2025

Here are some concepts that shaped wellness and self-care this year:

GLP-1 effect

The GLP-1 medications reshaped wellness in 2025 by shifting the focus from "diet culture" to metabolic health. These drugs mimic or amplify the natural GLP-1 hormone, but last much longer in the body. Increased demand for protein-forward nutrition changed how gyms, clinics, and wellness brands operate. It reframed weight loss from a willpower issue to a biological and hormonal one, reducing stigma and changing how obesity is discussed.

Personalised diet and nutrition

This year, the idea of wellness shifted from universal rules ("everyone should eat this") to individual data and sustainability. Technology, testing, and medical wellness made customisation accessible, while culture shifted toward prevention over quick fixes.

Gut-health nutrition, protein diets

In 2025, people chose outcomes such as better digestion, stable energy, muscle preservation, and healthy ageing. Flexitarian eating (plant-based), combined with a rich protein diet for muscle support and anti-inflammatory foods, were a big hit. So too was gut-health nutrition centred on fibre, fermented foods, and microbiome balance. This trend shows a choice towards eating that supports both daily wellness and long-term resilience.

AI-driven health and fitness

AI-driven health and fitness became prominent as people sought smarter, more personalised ways to manage their well-being. Using data from wearables, apps, and health tests, AI now tailors workouts, nutrition plans and sleep guidance, and recovery routines to suit individual needs. This shift moved fitness away from generic programmes toward real-time, adaptive support. Culturally, it reflects trust in data-led self-care and a desire for efficiency, helping people feel more in control of their bodies.

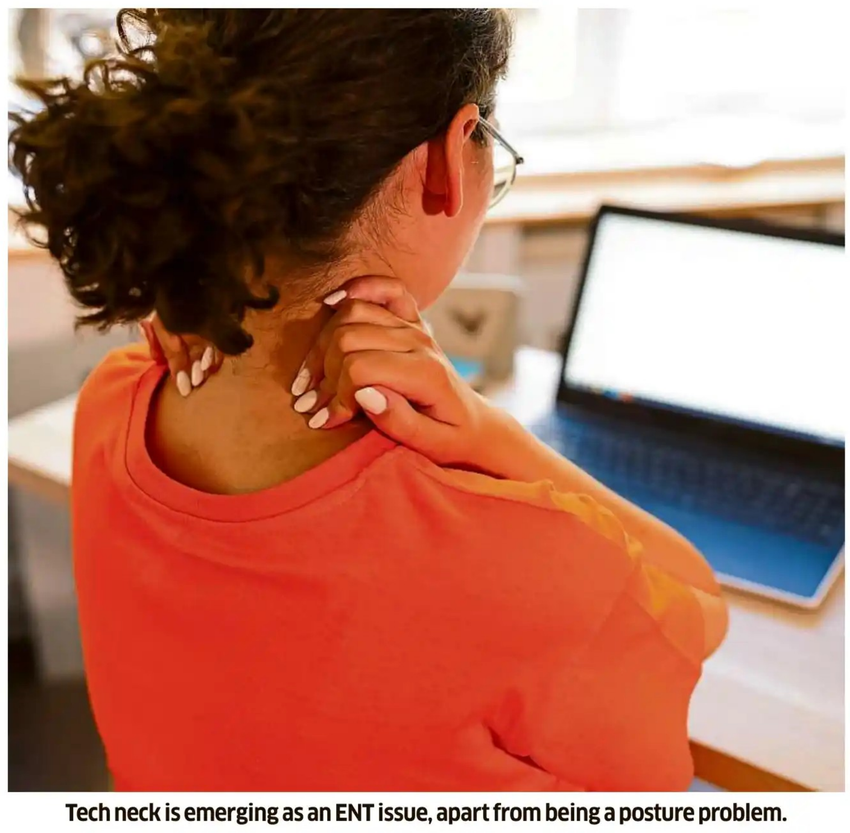
Lock-in challenges and maxxing

Lock-in challenges and maxing trends grew from a cultural desire for structure, focus, and visible self-improvement. Trends like sleepmaxxing, proteinmaxxing, step goals, and morning routines turn wellness into short-term, goal-based challenges. They are easy to share online, creating motivation through community and accountability. In wellness culture, this trend shows a shift toward discipline and optimisation, where small daily habits are treated as powerful tools for control, consistency, and personal transformation.

(CURATED BY TEJASHWINI MADYAL)

Tech impact on your neck

Hunched over your devices? Watch out, because it can cause neck pain, and also impact your ability to swallow, leading to throat and voice-related issues, writes Dr Deepthi Koganti



Tech neck is emerging as an ENT issue, apart from being a posture problem.

Glance through any café, co-working space, or a metro train, and you'll notice the same silhouette everywhere: head tilted forward, shoulders rounded, gaze locked on a screen. It has quietly become the posture of our times. Most young adults know this position can trigger neck pain, but very few realise it can also influence the throat, voice, and swallowing in unexpected ways.

In ENT clinics across large Indian cities, an interesting pattern is emerging. Patients in their twenties are turning up with symptoms that used to appear mostly in older adults — chronic throat clearing, trouble swallowing, voice fatigue, or the odd sensation of a "lump" in the throat. Scans and blood tests often show nothing concerning. The real starting point lies lower — in the neck.

As strange as it sounds, tech neck is slowly becoming an ENT issue. Here's how tech neck shows up:

Trouble with forward head

The head is heavier than most people realise. In a neutral position, the spine carries the load well. Tilt it forward for long hours, and the strain multiplies. The front of the neck shortens, the back overworks, and the muscles involved in swallowing and voice production begin functioning under pressure.

Patients describe this as:

- "A tight band under the jaw."
- "A fullness in the throat."
- "Something feels stuck even when I haven't eaten anything."

This sensation — called globus — was once linked primarily to reflux or anxiety. Increasingly, posture is proving to be a major trigger, especially for young adults glued to screens.

Trouble with swallowing

Swallowing is a coordinated movement involving the tongue, larynx, throat muscles, and esophagus. When the neck stays strained for long periods, this synchrony becomes less efficient.

Symptoms include:

- Food taking a moment longer to go down
- An urge to swallow repeatedly
- Mild dryness
- Occasional choking on saliva

These symptoms rarely indicate structural disease. The surrounding muscles simply stay tense, compressing the space around the throat. Ergonomic corrections and simple stretches often bring relief within weeks.

Voice fatigue

Your voice depends on good breath support and efficient vocal cord vibration. When the head juts forward, the airway narrows and the voice box shifts into an awkward position. The vocal cords then work harder to produce the same sound.

This is why young professionals — teachers, singers, customer-support workers, content creators, and those on video calls all day — increasingly report:

- Evening hoarseness
- A scratchy throat
- Inconsistent pitch
- Difficulty projecting

Many blame the AC or an "on-and-off infection," but posture-driven strain is often the root cause.

Chronic throat clearing is also a tech neck symptom.

Chronic throat clearing

One of the most persistent symptoms linked to tech neck is constant throat clearing. A tight throat sends the brain a signal that something is stuck, triggering the urge to clear. The more it happens, the more irritated the tissue becomes, creating a loop.

It's extremely common among young professionals who spend long hours at laptops. ENT examinations often reveal a mix of mild reflux, dryness, and posture-related tension — all feeding the same cycle.

Tech neck's ENT impact

Forward-head posture usually comes bundled with lifestyle patterns that strain the upper airway:

- High stress
- Shallow breathing
- Long screen exposure
- Poor hydration
- Irregular meals
- Sleep disruption

Stress tightens the jaw and upper airway. Dry indoor air irritates the throat. Late meals worsen reflux, which affects the vocal cords. Together, they amplify ENT symptoms.

Tech neck may look like a simple posture issue, but for many young adults, it's quietly reshaping how the throat and voice behave. The encouraging part is that these symptoms are reversible. With timely attention and a few mindful adjustments, the throat often returns to its natural ease.

If you're experiencing persistent tightness, swallowing difficulty, or voice fatigue, it's worth discussing it with an ENT specialist. Once posture enters the conversation, the solution is often clearer than expected.

(The author is a consultant - ENT surgeon at a Hyderabad hospital.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Most people improve significantly with a handful of steady habits:

- Keep screens at eye level.
- Take posture breaks every 30–45 minutes.
- Sip water regularly, especially in AC environments.
- Stretch the neck and chest gently.
- Avoid habitual throat clearing; a sip of water or a slow swallow works better.
- Address reflux if it coexists with symptoms.

STARSPEAK BY GURUJI SHRII ARNAV

(March 21 – April 19)

ARIES

The Year of the Red Phoenix

"When you stop chasing, destiny starts running toward you.

2026 ignites the fire of renewal. The old race – against time, people, or expectation –ends this year. Mars, your ruler, teaches that power without pause burns out brilliance. The first half urges recalibration – fitness, discipline, and self-definition.

By May, Jupiter fuels expansion in career and confidence: projects regain momentum, finances begin to mirror your effort, and delayed recognition arrives. This is a karmic reset –your ability to choose your battles decides your future. A new partnership (professional or personal) may start in unexpected circumstances – one that challenges your ego yet awakens your authenticity.

Hidden Fulfilment: That long-desired breakthrough – be it career stability or a creative triumph – finally materialises if you act with restraint, not rage.

Gem Compass: Red Coral or Garnet, to refine raw drive into enduring success.

Mantra for 2026: "I win by waiting."

(April 20 – May 20)

TAURUS

The Year of Silent Mastery

"When the seed stops fearing the dark, it becomes the tree.

2026 will not shout – it will whisper. But those who listen will hear destiny rearranging itself in their favour. This is the year where patience pays, and elegance triumphs over effort. Jupiter's steady movement into Cancer restores comfort, family warmth, and the long-awaited sense of "arrival." A long-desired foundation – home, business, or relationship – finally finds its form.

Saturn from Pisces refines your ambitions, sanding away excess ego. Professionally, expect slow but irreversible gains; recognition may come quietly, but it will endure. Finances reward minimalism – buy less, own better, and invest in what lasts. Those in creative or healing fields find their finest work through solitude.

Hidden Fulfilment: The dream of your perfect sanctuary – home, business, or inner peace – can finally take shape. Guard it with grace.

Gem Compass: Emerald or Diamond, to balance serenity with magnetism.

Mantra for 2026: "I grow without noise."

(May 21 – June 20)

GEMINI

The Year of Divine Interference

"A whisper in the right ear can change an entire destiny.

The Twins return to their true theatre – ideas, communication, and movement – but this year, divine interruptions alter every script. Jupiter's entry into Cancer stabilises your second house of values and voice: the talker becomes the teacher. 2026 blesses collaborations, writing, speaking, teaching, or technology ventures – but only when you act from clarity, not curiosity.

Mercury retrogrades feel like sacred checkpoints rather than setbacks; they remind you to finish what you start. Friendships evolve into alliances, and love – especially from afar – finds synchronicity around August. Health requires digital detox and deeper sleep; your nervous system needs grounding more than adrenaline.

Hidden Fulfilment: The idea you almost gave up on could become your life's turning point. Speak it again, with faith.

Gem Compass: Emerald or Peridot for divine timing.

Mantra for 2026: "My words build worlds."

(June 21 – July 22)

CANCER

The Year of Returning Light

"The moon does not chase reflection; it simply reveals the night.

2026 restores your rhythm after years of emotional tide and retreat. Jupiter's arrival in your sign reawakens faith and magnetism – you attract without effort when aligned with purpose. Family, real estate, and ancestral energy turn auspicious; what you nurture multiplies. This is your rebirth through belonging year. Professionally, visibility increases – especially after May – yet what distinguishes you now is composure, not competition. Saturn from Pisces urges wisdom, learning, travel, and the deepening of skill. Expect a philosophical growth spurt: your worldview expands through mentorship, teaching, or distant lands. Relationships mature – old wounds finally transmute into compassion. Around August, a personal wish involving a loved one finds resolution.

Hidden Fulfilment: The opportunity to restore a bond or reclaim a piece of your own heart you thought you lost forever.

Gem Compass: Natural Pearl or Moonstone, to harmonise mood with mission.

Mantra for 2026: "I feel, therefore I rise."

(July 23 – August 22)

LEO

The Year of the Solar Oath

"The sun is never humbled by clouds – it waits.

After years of fire-testing, 2026 brings consolidation. You've fought, glowed, fallen, and risen – and now comes refinement. The first half asks for decluttering of the stage and soul. By July, Jupiter's benevolent alignment brings powerful patrons, visibility, and financial resurgence: leadership returns, but this time with inner silence. Saturn from Pisces deepens your spiritual backbone. You learn the paradox of surrender – that sometimes stepping back earns you more reverence. Romantic ties take karmic weight; those that survive this year are destined to become legacy partnerships. Health and creativity flourish – your aura burns brightest through discipline, not drama. A significant turning point in career or status emerges around September.

Hidden Fulfilment: The spotlight returns, but this time it feels like home.

Gem Compass: Ruby or Spinel, to channel divine royalty into measured action.

Mantra for 2026: "I rule by grace."

(August 23 – September 22)

VIRGO

The Year of the Sacred Equation

"When precision meets faith, miracles become measurable.

For the analytical Virgo, 2026 is alchemical – logic marries intuition. Jupiter's transit through Cancer strengthens your networks and long-term dreams. The plans you've silently built begin to take public form. You attract collaborators, mentors, and partners who match your efficiency with empathy. Saturn from Pisces, however, demands you choose carefully whom to serve. Boundaries become your greatest virtue. Professionally, the second half of the year sees expansion through teaching, consultancy, or systems you create. Avoid micro-managing divine timing – trust your own process. Love becomes quieter yet deeper and you will realise the value of patience when it comes to relationships.

Hidden Fulfilment: The long-unsolved puzzle – career, health, or heart – finally resolves through one divine pattern.

Gem Compass: Blue Sapphire or Peridot, to align precision with providence.

Mantra for 2026: "I serve the sacred."

(September 23 – October 22)

LIBRA

The Year of the Balancing Flame

"Harmony is not the absence of conflict – it's the art of return.

2026 invites you to re-negotiate every contract – professional, emotional, and karmic. Venus, your ruler, moves through powerful zones, asking: What still deserves your beauty and bandwidth? Jupiter's rise in Cancer illuminates the highest point of your chart – career, recognition, and purpose converge. Those who stayed authentic through 2024–25 now rise as voices of grace and reason. Saturn from Pisces reminds you that work must be worship, not weight. Delegate what drains you; design your life around peace, not pace. Partnerships evolve – some complete their karmic cycle, others deepen into sacred companionships. Creative projects and diplomacy thrive. A powerful alliance in mid-year may open global or media-related opportunities.

Hidden Fulfilment: A long-awaited professional vindication or reunion comes, restoring your inner equilibrium.

Gem Compass: Diamond or White Sapphire, for fairness and fire.

Mantra for 2026: "I balance by becoming whole."

(October 23 – November 21)

SCORPIO

The Year of the Serpent's Crown

"Transformation is not an event – it's a lifestyle.

This year, you rise from your own ashes – but gently. Mars and Pluto guide you to rebuild strength through strategy, not struggle. Jupiter's presence in Cancer grants divine protection through wisdom, teachers, and faraway journeys. A forgotten dream or study finds resurrection, giving your power a new expression. Finances stabilise after March; hidden blessings flow from legacy, property, or inheritance. Health and energy demand purification – old patterns must be released at the cellular level. In love, intensity softens: you no longer chase depth – you are the depth. Professionally, spiritual or research-based work shines; Scorpio entrepreneurs may diversify or expand into international waters.

Hidden Fulfilment: A secret wish connected to destiny – travel, learning, or recognition – unfolds almost mystically by year's end.

Gem Compass: Red Coral or Cat's Eye, to guard energy and sharpen intuition.

Mantra for 2026: "I conquer by knowing."

(November 22 – December 21)

SAGITTARIUS

The Year of the Golden Arrow

"Faith aims where logic hesitates.

For you, 2026 is destiny with direction. Jupiter, your ruler, gifts clarity in emotional and financial bonds–shared energies become sacred contracts. The lessons of the past few years now translate into mastery. You speak less, deliver more. Partnerships and collaborations take centre stage – especially those involving teaching, law, or global expansion. Saturn ensures you build on truth, not talk. A long-pending real estate or family matter concludes favourably by mid-year. Spiritually, you are drawn to silence retreats, philosophy, or ancestral reconnection – these will recharge your fire. Health improves through balance, not extremes. Romance rekindles through shared purpose rather than impulse. By November, an achievement validates your long faith in the invisible.

Hidden Fulfilment: The dream of global impact – through your words, work, or wisdom – finally hits its mark.

Gem Compass: Yellow Sapphire or Topaz, to amplify clarity and divine luck.

Mantra for 2026: "I trust my aim."

(December 22 – January 19)

CAPRICORN

The Year of the Mountain's Breath

"Stillness is not weakness – it is the summit's secret.

For years, you climbed with grit; now the view changes. 2026 blesses consolidation, peace, and power without noise. Jupiter's grace from Cancer stabilises partnerships –both business and emotional – bringing maturity and mutual respect. Your sign, long tempered by Saturn, now steps into leadership that feels earned, not imposed. Career visibility heightens between April and August – expect invitations, expansion, or renewed faith from superiors. Yet your true growth lies in emotional mastery: learning when to retreat, when to respond, and when to simply be. Money matters improve through structure – think systems, not shortcuts. Health aligns with routine, ritual, and breathwork. Relationships mature into quiet companionships; ego gives way to elegance.

Hidden Fulfilment: A long-term dream – property, position, or recognition – finally crystallises through patient precision.

Gem Compass: Blue Sapphire or Garnet, to ground ambition in divine timing.

Mantra for 2026: "I endure to enlighten."

(January 20 – February 18)

AQUARIUS

The Year of the Electric Soul

"The rebel becomes the rhythm once it finds its reason.

You've been rewriting the script of freedom for years; now, 2026 rewards you for daring to be different. Jupiter's glow in Cancer turns your focus to healing, service, and creative reorganisation. Health, daily discipline, and mental hygiene become your sacred labs of transformation. Saturn, your ancient ruler, anchors identity and purpose. What once felt scattered now fuses into clarity – expect recognition in causes that uplift others. New alliances form through technology, teaching, or innovation. Romantically, you may reconnect with someone whose vision once mirrored yours–but this time, with maturity. Finances stabilise through methodical restructuring. By October, one idea, invention, or insight redefines your direction.

Hidden Fulfilment: A unique talent or passion project could turn into your true-life mission.

Gem Compass: Amethyst or Blue Sapphire, to channel lightning into legacy.

Mantra for 2026: "I invent to inspire."

(February 19 – March 20)

PISCES

The Year of the Dream Alchemist

"The ocean never announces its power – it simply surrounds.

The mystic of the zodiac returns to centre stage. 2026 is your Renaissance year, when imagination translates into influence. Jupiter in Cancer blesses creative fertility, love, and joy – your inner child finds its temple. Artistic, spiritual, and healing pursuits thrive; what you once did for solace may now become your signature. Saturn in your sign refines dreams into disciplined design. The key lesson – boundaries are not barriers; they are sacred frames for miracles. Finances improve steadily through practical compassion – helping others helps you. Romantic ties deepen through authenticity, not illusion. A rare alignment in September could turn a private vision into public success. Sleep, nature, and water rituals renew your magic.

Hidden Fulfilment: The dream you whispered only to the Divine begins taking tangible form.

Gem Compass: Yellow Sapphire or Aquamarine, to unite intuition with illumination.

Mantra for 2026: "I dream to define."

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